THE SRIVIDYA SCHOOL OF SAKTA TANTRISM * PT.2 * [redacted]S

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Part Two, Conclusion and Appendices

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The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism:
A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

by

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Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition in South India
Introduction

A. Methodology for the Study of Living Tradition

At the outset of the dissertation I mentioned briefly the basic methodology employed in the study of the living Śrīvidyā tradition, namely, observation, interview and participation. The most unusual aspect of this study is its reliance upon essentially "private" information, that is, materials that have been gathered because of the author's access to the initiated tradition. Since Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage has insured secrecy for generations the present enquiry naturally raises serious methodological and ethical issues.

It seems one thing to write from "within" a given religious tradition---this is done by scholars who are as committed to their individual faith as they are devoted to honest enquiry---yet it is quite another thing to discuss an esoteric tradition's secrets and to assume that other scholars may not have access to similar materials. Because of these unusual circumstances some further elaboration regarding the acquisition of materials seems appropriate.

Śrīvidyā tradition itself offers precedence of critical self analysis. Oral tradition has historically distinguished adepts more and less devoted to the exposition

of its intellectual and theoretical components. Intellectuals are frequently scholars in traditional sciences, composing textual sources within and beyond Śrīvidyā's parameters, and yet they are no less esteemed for their ritual expertise and personal spirituality. Bhāskararāya is, perhaps, the key figure culminating this tradition of self analysis and despite Śrīvidyā's historical self preoccupations it is evident that many of its authors were sensitive to the criticisms of non-initiates.

There are those within Śrīvidyā, however, who hold any scholarly enterprise with suspicion, even when it is performed in the pious service of the tradition. Like all Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts emphasis the need for active participation in all phases of religious discipline; intellectual endeavors for their own sake are, at best, tangential to the spirit of Tantrism and, at worst, a violation of one of its foremost tenets. Bhāskararāya, along with other historical commentators, frequently chides those seeking a purely "academic" knowledge of tradition by claiming it to be a fruitless pursuit.[1]

But the study of theoretical and ritual intricacies for the sake of incorporating them into active religious practice has always been a major aspect of Śrīvidyā tradition. As we have seen in Part One, Śrīvidyā elaborates its intellectual and theoretical components to extraordinary

lengths---none of which, we can be sure, is done simply for the sake of intellectual rigor. Traditionalists exhibiting a natural aversion to Śrīvidyā's intellectual components are, for the most part, no less diligent in their practical and ritual interpretations. As a result, the majority of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts accept the deeply rooted predisposition for intellectual speculation as part of the spiritual discipline; intellectual enquiry and scholarship are, historically speaking, well within the tradition's self understanding of religious life.

Srīvidyā for its initiated adherents, as for most persons committed to their religious faith, is not an endeavor separated from other aspects of life. It is a total commitment to a way of life that includes for many proponents a broad intellectual curiosity that entails a critical study of human nature and natural science. Some adepts are more parochial in their interests but no less honest in faith, and of course Śrīvidyā has its share of the narrow-minded, the hypocritical and the pompous.

The materials on living traditions included here were collected primarily during 1984-85 though my affiliations with Śrīvidyā adepts began in 1977. The present study should be considered the result of this extended period of research. Prior to 1984, however, I had had only limited contact with Śrīvidyā adepts who were not close personal

acquaintances. The decision to undertake the study was based primarily upon two major considerations: feasibility and, what might be termed, ethical responsibility.

The crucial factor was not only the permission but the active involvement of my own teacher, Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy of Madurai. Dr. Sundaramoorthy's training as an academic schooled in Western methods of religious and philological studies as well as his own involvement in Srividya provided me with an unusual opportunity. His perspective is that of detached scholar and involved practitioner; the breadth of his knowledge was essential for determining the quality of gathered information.

The vast majority of interviews were conducted with both Dr. Sundaramoorthy and myself present and, indeed, it was frequently only his presence that permitted me initial access into an adept's home or into a temple complex. In most cases adepts did not question our initial enquiries until after we had been allowed to enter the premises and enjoy their hospitality: getting "in the door", so to speak, was not the difficult part.

In only a few weeks of research it was determined that a study of living adepts was feasible insofar as acquiring information from a sufficiently broad cross section of initiates was concerned. Actually getting adepts to discuss their own traditional interpretations and experiences proved

to be another matter. Though Srīvidyā is carried on by persons living essentially private religious lives, the number of informants increased exponentially through our initial contacts. What was first considered one of the most challenging aspects for determining the study's feasibility---meeting a diverse cross section of initiates willing to discuss their traditional practices---was ultimately one of the least critical issues.

Of more consequence to me as a scholar and participant was the responsibility felt towards Śrīvidyā's traditional secrecy and its implied restrictions on public discussion. What gave me the right to come forward publicly with materials considered private from the time of their inception? The mere academic enterprise was hardly enough justification given Tantrism's admonitions.

The decision to proceed, I believe, was neither irresolute nor irresponsible but rather based on a feeling shared by a significant number of adepts. Such a study, it was decided, would do a service to Śrīvidyā tradition only when undertaken without apologetic motives. Adepts agreed that scholarship and tradition are best served by an enquiry into Srīvidyā's historical and theological developments that is conducted in a public forum. Formulating a public image has never before been such a pressing concern to Tantrics and most have preferred to maintain a rigorous privacy and

secrecy. But contemporary circumstances and ŚrIvidyā's wide spread acceptance in south India by high caste elements have brought about a demand for a more open investigation into its practice, an investigation prompted by adepts themselves.

Like other Tantric sects, ŚrIvidyā has become increasingly "available" through printed sources and through a formulation of its own self identity vis a vis other sects. Adepts have never been immune to "outside" opinions despite their protestations and emphasis on privacy and initiation. LakṣmIdhara's defense of the Samayācāra and the Śaṅkara tradition's "sanitization" of Śākta elements point to a concern for bringing esoteric elements within the boundaries of conservative social acceptability. The ŚrIvidyā adepts recorded here are at least in part responding to these and similar issues. But unlike earlier historical figures, these contemporary adepts are subject to even more drastic changes in the tradition's transmission, evidenced in the transition from oral and privately maintained scriptures to publicly available printed texts.

ŚrIvidyā offers a fascinating example of the pressures of technological advancement on secret (or at least, initiated) scriptures and traditions as they enter the public domain of print. This transition into the public domain has indeed affected even the notion of scripture

itself since the printing of Śrīvidyā sources invariably involves individuals not directly involved in it or at least those not within the same branch of the tradition. Without effective control over the printed "product", many adepts are reluctant to accept the contents of a given publication as authentic or free from serious error, including unwarranted interpolation.[2] In other cases the printing of mantras or other sensitive materials is criticized not because of errors in content but for being printed at all, or because an edition fails to provide the necessary explanations, including warnings or disclaimers concerning the ritual use of a such materials by non-initiates.

The majority of adepts are aware of some of these historical changes, especially involving the transition to the printed word and their increasing dependence upon it, but they are not always involved in critically assessing the consequences. None fail to observe the effects the availability of printed texts (or the lack thereof) have on their oral transmissions and the deepening role the printed word plays in their overall understanding. Only a few essential texts are preserved mnemonically and almost all serve some ritual purpose, such as paddhatis, stotras or stavas. Texts preserved as handwritten manuscripts are less frequently in the hands of private initiates intending to pass them on to future generations than they are in public

or formal private manuscript libraries. Thus contemporary adepts are increasingly dependent upon printed documents that they neither inherently trust nor are necessarily able to acquire for either financial or logistical reasons.

In several cases it was my own ability to make available works in print editions that contributed visibly to adepts' interpretations. I acknowledge that I have had, in this respect, a significant effect on their views of the textual tradition and at least a tangential effect on the future of those lineages for whom I provided texts. Books even when available in print are not always financially within the reach of traditional practitioners though it should be emphasized that such gifts were never used as inducements for information.

Adepts were informed in advance not only that their views might be made public but that they would be open to criticism. I do not believe this seriously affected the sincerity or frankness of discussions and the few cases where it seemed to have made a difference have been removed from consideration. This delicate issue was more frequently raised first by the interviewee. What was I going to do with this information if it was revealed to me? Remarkably enough not one individual refused to discuss the tradition openly, provided they were not held accountable personally.[3]

The decision to discuss openly and for the public

record any elements of the tradition considered secret (itself a largely subjective judgement at the discretion of each lineage's interpretation) was made by each individual consenting to the limited conditions outlined above. What some adepts considered too sensitive a topic for direct comment, such as the actual worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna, others remarked upon freely. Many adepts, however, acted without restraint in their frankness nor were they sparing of other living and historical figures.

I did not deem it my duty to arbitrate disputes or clarify interpretations based on my own textual or historical studies since I was most interested in ascertaining the adepts' own views. Interpretive issues were raised to elicit a response. On points of personal disagreement, however, I simply refrained from mentioning my opinion or responded diplomatically. The overall aim was to gather and interpret information as it was presented rather than create or directly contribute to an adept's opinion. In the majority of cases adepts simply told us what we had hoped they would, the key element to success being patience and gentle persistence.

Though some interviewed adepts will undoubtedly disapprove of my analysis and criticism, they will not be able to object on the grounds of undocumented or partial accounts. Materials were either recorded on tape or in

notes later translated.[4] The decision on the part of Dr. Sundaramoorthy and myself to make public certain interpretive aspects of the tradition was no different than the choice made by the initiates we interviewed: whatever was said is recounted in as unprejudiced a manner as possible. We relied upon our own expertise to determine the quality and authenticity of the remarks. I have not included myself directly in any interpretive accounts and Dr. Sundaramoorthy only in those instances deemed particularly illuminative to the study.

Beginning with only three known informants, the task of expanding the network involved collecting locally published materials of various organized Śrīvidyā lineages. These were selected on an _ad hoc_ basis and initially by their availability in commercial book shops and through private collectors. Every lead was followed and none excluded without investigation or because a group or individual did not fit some preconceived pattern. Any person or text _claiming_ to belong to Śrīvidyā was at least reviewed. Texts were traced back to publishing sources and from these contacts usually further names and addresses were obtained verbally. From a single adept it was often possible to contact at least two others inside and outside his or her lineage. Several traditional lineages have formally established themselves in a quasi-public manner, producing

written and published materials for ritual use and study: some intend these published materials purely for their own private use while others distribute them openly. Frequently organized groups or even individuals are involved as well in conducting private and semi-public gatherings.

The final results of these investigations were actually quite astonishing (especially in the frankness of the adepts' remarks) to say nothing of being voluminous. The actual number of informants included here is only a sample of the materials gathered. Quotations are sometimes drawn from several conversations or from different portions of the same conversation. Close attention is paid to the contexts in which remarks have been made and their presentation is not intended either to confirm or reject their content.

There can be little doubt that the success of an interview depended on establishing mutual confidence and respect in its incipient stages. An adept's opinions were not simply accepted as veridical on textual or interpretive matters but were taken at face value in respect to accounts of personal experience. It is a presupposition of this study that adepts' comments included here were made with sincere intentions; others deemed lacking personal integrity have been omitted.

There can be little question that the both the methodology and the results of this study depend upon my own

subjective evaluations. The integrity of these findings depends in no small measure on an ability to appraise individual character, but in all matters subject to historical and textual verification an objective conclusion has been reached whenever possible. I fully accept the blame but cannot claim full credit for gathering and evaluating these findings: Dr. Sundaramoorthy has been a constant source of advice and one that, over an extended period of time, has proven as critically incisive as one is likely to find. In the majority of cases after we identified ourselves as Śrīvidyā initiates in order to establish a mutual interest and sense of responsibility for the tradition, the aim was simply to direct the interviewees' conversation rather than offer our own input. In this respect, I should add, Dr. Sundaramoorthy was masterful---he deftly concealed his own expertise whenever it seemed appropriate to the task. To put it in his own words:

> The job is to find out what other Śrīvidyā adepts think and do, and to judge the degree to which what they say is what they do (and vice versa). In some respects, say in the content of specific texts or doctrines, it is easy to evaluate an adept's knowledge; their sincerity, I believe, is reflected in the ways in which they express themselves rather than in their knowledge of what is historical or factually verifiable. But their own historical and practical interpretations provide the key to understanding what Śrīvidyā means to them as religious people. Even when they are far off the mark factually their views enliven an understanding of what

> makes up the tradition. The heart of the tradition, after all, is people who follow it.[5]

B. Sampling the Living Tradition: Caste and Other Considerations within Srīvidyā Lineages

The materials selected for inclusion in the present study seek out a cross section of living Śrīvidyā in south India. There is both consistency and significant variation in the opinions expressed. Śrīvidyā clearly emerges in the historical and theoretical continuity of its views (as they were discussed in Part One) and yet, like all forms of religious faith, ultimately finds its locus in the individuality of its adherents.

In the final assessment members of over thirty distinct lineages (parampara) were identified and dozens of others lacking the standard measure of three generations of teachers. It is difficult to say precisely how many individuals were interviewed since on certain occasions at large gatherings dozens of conversations were documented. Of these thirty paramparas, six have been chosen for profiles, others mentioned only selectively.

The decision to limit discussion to a sampling of the materials is based on two determining criteria. First, these groups and individuals were the ones with which I had frequent contact, and naturally, I was able to determine

more accurately their theological positions and observe more closely their ritual practices. Second, they often but not always reflected opinions shared by the majority not included. While a degree of consistency on theoretical matters cannot account for the individuality demonstrated in practice, there was, in my opinion, certainly enough consistency to attempt a portrait of the normative "tradition" as actually having a representative opinion. The groups repeatedly cited here offer some of the most fascinating variations in theory and practice or have an especially important role in the historical diffusion of Srividya tradition. For example, one group traces their lineage directly to Bhāskararāya and yet interpret his directions for ritual practice in ways inconsistent with his specifications. Another claims itself to descend through the Śaṅkara tradition while yet another links itself with the temple traditions of Cidambaram's Naṭarāja.

Profiles of these six lineages are given special attention but others are cited (and documented in the notes) when their opinions are deemed noteworthy. Following the profiles of lineages, profiles of three individuals are also given. These adepts are, in one way or another, remarkable in their interpretations or practices.

The men and women interviewed ranged in age from twelve to eighty; the sampled proportions are roughly the same

between genders since the tradition at least theoretically accepts both as equal for initiation; evidence suggests that the living tradition fulfills this Tantric prescription. A clear majority of Śrīvidyā adepts in contemporary south India are Brahmin by caste, perhaps as many as eighty percent of the initiates. Of these all but a select few are not smārta Śaivites by family tradition.

The reasons for Śrīvidyā's domination by Brahmin caste initiates are complex and have both religious and social dimensions. In Tamil Nāḍu one historical reason for Brahmin domination of Śrīvidyā is the near exclusion of non-Brahmins from the study of Sanskrit. In the past seventy-five years, non-Brahmin participation in Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit centered literary tradition has been certainly influenced by powerful anti-Brahmin sentiments and by the "caste feelings" of Brahmin initiates.

Śrīvidyā's oral tradition is transmitted almost exclusively in regional, vernacular languages, is tied to Sanskrit as its theoretical and ritual medium. At one point research was deliberately directed towards obtaining a larger sample of non-Brahmin initiates. This reflected not only the kinds of contacts we had made from within Brahmin dominated lineages but what appeared to be a reflection of the present situation. An effort was made to investigate inter-caste relations within the sect. Results indicate

that "caste feelings", that is, strong identification with caste and its defined social dimensions still prevail among so-called egalitarian Tantrics. Upper caste initiates invariably "qualified" their relations with low caste initiates while low caste adherents expressed ambivalence towards initiates and non-initiates from socially privileged castes maintaining feelings of superiority.

None of the non-Brahmin Śrīvidya initiates in Tamil Nādu harboring ill feelings towards Brahmins for their historical roles, view Sanskrit per se as a socially repressive tool of domination. This is unusual and especially noteworthy because of the tendency in contemporary Tamil Naḍu to identify one with the other: Sanskrit is, in the eyes of non-Brahmins, the Brahmin's language and to a large extent represents their monopoly of privilege. On the other hand, however, oral traditions within Śrīvidyā have given Tamil, the vernacular language, an important role in the teaching and explication of Sanskrit sources. Without the expressive qualities of the spoken language, the mysteries of Tantric Sanskrit render Śrīvidyā's teachings obscure, if not entirely irrelevant.

Only a few self-designated Samayācārins maintained that Śrīvidyā was restricted high caste (i.e., traivarṇika) persons and only a handful would admit that caste feelings affected their choice of initiates or their welcoming of low

caste persons into ritual contexts. Some maintained a dual standard, one Tantric and one they termed Vaidika. In one interesting case I was invited to witness a śrīcakra pūjā of a particular lineage and was given an honored seat to observe the ritual. Nothing was kept secret either during the ritual or in the conversations that followed. When it was time to share the food offerings, however, the host made the situation quite clear:

> I am a Tantric regarding spiritual matters and treat any initiate equally. We are ritual equals and may discuss our shared tradition openly. But I am a Vaidika in all other social situations. I am not permitted according to caste restrictions to eat with anyone other than my caste equals.[6]

This elderly, senior initiate distinguished what he considered spiritual events based on principles of equality from activities encompassing daily life based on hierarchy. Once the ritual and discussion (still part of the "ritual" liminality, as it were) was completed, the rules of ordinary social intercourse obtained even with regard to substances offered in those ritual contexts.

Other Brahmin initiates expressed less rigid lines demarcating themselves from low caste participants and with regard to their general social contacts with such persons. In one instance an organized group sponsored a large semi-private (that is, by invitation only) ritual worship made possible by private donations. The chief administrator of

this project explained the reason for only Brahmin caste participants this way:

> We do not restrict entry into the group by caste nor will I personally discriminate against anyone by caste, whether it be in sharing food or in other ritual matters. But I am bound by certain social restrictions in order to make this ritual successful. If I were to accept donations from non-Brahmins and allow them to participate then I would offend many of those Brahmins on whom I depend for support. My concern is to make this event successful, it is unfortunate that this includes not inviting qualified non-Brahmin initiates.[7]

It was clear that I, as a non-Brahmin participant, did not fall into this category of exclusion and that the reason was simple: not all Westerners were considered in the same way as Indians, my introduction to participants as a Śrīvidyā initiate exempted me from these caste restrictions.[8] Since no other non-Indian attended the function it is difficult to assess how they might have been treated. Presumably only an initiate or close guest of an initiate would have been invited or permitted to observe. In this case there was no visible objection raised to my sharing in the ritual prasāda but it is impossible to tell if individual participants privately expressed disapproval. A gauge of the tacit acceptance of my presence was that the organizers expected, and indeed compelled me, to partake in the distribution of food offerings and no participant refrained from accepting food after I did.

As in the earlier example, this group's organizers felt conventional social constraints far more influential and determining than Tantric caste and gender egalitarianism. The group hosting the ritual performance considered themselves Kaulas, accepting the ritual legitimacy of such things as the pañcamakāras, and the inclusion of any qualified person to the ranks of initiates regardless of caste--at least theoretically. It was increasingly evident, however, that despite expressions of theoretical equality between castes, social conventions influencing high caste initiates effectively limit access to this lineage's secrets and participation in organized events. There are, however, exceptions to this general tendency (cited below) in which Tantrism's egalitarian claims are reflected in the practical interpretations of Brahmin-dominated groups.

In summary, there are three general categories of high caste, Brahmin-dominated initiates:

(1) The first severely restricts access to Śrīvidyā tradition and usually limits initiation to traivarṇika caste males. In practice I never discovered any of these initiates to be other than Brahmins. They base their claim on being Samayācārins following Lakṣmīdhara though it appears that they have either not carefully investigated Lakṣmīdhara's works or have interpreted him to suit their own needs. Śrīvidyā, they assert, is only practiced

correctly and in its "original" form when it follows these caste and practical restrictions. This group also demonstrates an aversion to the term Tantra or Tantric and views Śrīvidyā as a "non-Tantric" tradition.

(2) The second type of high caste initiate usually claims a Kaula heritage and frequently accepts in theory the controversial elements of Tantric theory and ritual. In practice, however, these controversial elements are usually only in evidence symbolically or through accepted forms of substitution (pratinidhi). Tantric egalitarianism gives way to the rigors of social convention concerning caste, marriage and gender roles: while theoretically accepting a "Tantric view" in which these are not the substantive criteria for evaluating spiritual qualification (adhikāra), these lineages nonetheless conform to the norms of "ordinary" smārta Brahmin society.

(3) The third type of high caste initiate is more complex since he accepts Tantric views on spiritual equality between castes and sexes but may not accept certain social implications. For example, in practice, one finds non-traivarṇikas initiated into Śrīvidyā by Brahmin adepts and no dual standard of Tantrika and Vaidika as cited above. Yet certain social conventions are rigorously upheld, especially in instances in which the Tantras are silent or vague. For example, among Brahmins of this type the

restrictions placed on women during menstruation are still actively enforced. Women are secluded or restricted from touching or partaking in ordinary "unpolluted" activities or ritual events. In effect, this creates an interpretive dilemma for the Brahmin initiate: should women be excluded from initiation during their years of fertility because their menstrual cycle interrupts the daily ritual obligations which must be performed in a state of ritual purity? There is clearly a split on this an other similar issues involving ritual purity and pollution. Some high caste teachers freely initiate women, giving them either a "special" set of restrictions to govern these recurring circumstances; others simply do not articulate the issue and permit women to exercise their own judgement. Still others maintain that since women usually do not receive initiation without the permission of their husbands (this being an unstated "rule" of oral tradition) and are frequently initiates along with their husbands, their husbands perform their ritual obligations during either the period of pollution or for all the menstruating years. In some cases teachers do not initiate women until after they have passed their fertile years. Restrictions on ritual and obligatory forms of sādhana performed while in a ritual state of inauspiciousness are less severe. For example, initiates within a year of the death of an immediate relative, such as

a parent, do not curb their Śrīvidyā ritual practices but do observe a year's penance in other respects such as refraining from auspicious events such as temple rituals, marriages or other rites (samskāra).

In effect, this third category of adept maintains a dual Tantrika/Vaidika set of standards not based strictly on caste (though not lacking caste considerations) and definitely effecting distinctions based on gender. Brahmin women initiated into Śrīvidyā are subject to a different set of restrictions than men even though they may be ritual or spiritual equals in other situations. It is not uncommon, for example, for women to be Śrīvidyā gurus and leaders of a lineage. In one documented case, the wife of a deceased teacher became a lineage's guru and ultimate authority. Her traditional initiated name (dīkṣānāma) did not, however, reflect a gender distinction. According to one adept gender distinctions do not substantially effect the spiritual achievement of women but merely maintain the "correct" ritual and social conditions for the tradition to flourish.

> We consider women our spiritual equals and they may perform all the rituals and disciplines that men do. But because they are different, they must accept certain qualifications and even restrictions. We believe, for example, in observing menstrual pollution which, according to our custom, is only proper. But that women menstruate does not mean they cannot be Śrīvidya upāsakas or even great teachers of the tradition. It only means that they must observe certain rules that apply to them but this does not lower their stature either spiritually or, for that

matter, socially.[9]

However this adept may explain the situation there is undoubtedly a form of gender distinction observed regarding qualification and practice of the tradition. It is clear that egalitarianism in the Tantras is not interpreted to mean men and women are subject to the same set of qualifications and conditions. I found no open dissent among high caste women initiates to the customary practices concerning ritual pollution based on gender nor did any suggest that their Śrīvidyā initiation exempted them from these observances. There was expressed on occasion a general dislike for these observances but no women (at least in my experience) disregarded or actively sought to change the "rules" or felt empowered to do so.[10] Given the dominant position of men in Brahmin society in south India, a woman could not break these traditions without risking ostracism from her family and community.

Predictably, among non-Brahmin initiates there is a good deal more egalitarianism in practice towards women and persons of different castes. But since Śrīvidyā in south India, and in Tamil Nāḍu especially, is dominated by Brahmins it is also surprising to see little anti-Brahmanical sentiment prevalent among the non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts. Many low caste adepts view Śrīvidyā's place within Tantric tradition as an equalizing factor, a

religious force that levels out caste distinctions in both spiritual and social domains. Some low caste initiates felt their Śrīvidyā initiation effectively changed their social status and they expected equal treatment in all respects from Brahmin initiates. Those who found that the ideal of caste equality is, in practice, sometimes qualified by a dual Tantrika/Vaidika set of standards retorted that such interpretations violate the spirit of Śrīvidyā tradition. Several others responded by saying that those claiming a Vaidika heritage were bound to an additional set of religious injunctions which in no way affect their Tantric vows; they maintain that when Vedic rules discriminate against fellow Tantrics they should no longer apply. In other situations where individuals are not "religious" equals, ordinary conventions may be considered applicable; for others, however, any caste or gender distinctions either social or religious are considered reprehensible. A select few Brahmin initiates also maintained that there could be no separate set of qualifications for Śrīvidyā based on gender or caste and that Śrīvidyā sādhanā demanded a total disregard for any caste restrictions. In one such instance, a Brahmin initiate purposely arranged the marriage of his initiate son to his guru's daughter born to a non-Brahmin woman.

C. Classifying Living Śrīvidyā Tradition: Guru as the Locus of Authority and Leadership within Lineages

The most accurate criterion for identifying a Śrīvidyā adept is self designation and for the adept implies the first level of distinction within Śrīvidyā, namely, between initiates and non-initiates. The present study also makes this distinction an initial point of departure: it begins by separating initiates from those non-initiates who have become in some way associated with Śrīvidyā practices. The relationships within Śrīvidyā lineages and between initiates of other lineages is the first topic of investigation. Before proceeding directly to this discussion, however, something should be said first concerning the definition of a spiritual lineage and the meaning of religious authority in general in the Tantric tradition.

An authentic Śrīvidyā lineage (parampara) of adepts is defined according to the Tantric tradition's own specifications, that is, by the claim to at least three generations of qualified teachers. All initiates into the Śrīvidyā mantra are classified "adepts" since at this level there is usually (but not always) an extensive preliminary form of instruction. The actual manner of initiation and instruction is discussed later in the profiles of lineages and individuals.

Further distinctions between initiated adepts within

lineages are less obvious but no less important. Not all initiates become gurus and, in fact, only a few take on the responsibility of passing along the tradition, especially if their own teacher remains living. Occasionally an adept gives a partial or prefatory form of instruction and leaves the rest for some other, more senior person within the lineage or for the lineage's recognized guru.

Thus within each lineage is a kind of implied hierarchy based partially on seniority and partially on the recognition of spiritual accomplishment given by the guru or others. Not every individual is categorized or given a specific place within a lineage's hierarchy but each recognizes the authority of those who, for some reason or another, have acquired this status or power.

The key to understanding the notion of spiritual power lies in the theological role given to Śakti within the Śākta Tantric world-view. The material universe in its totality is a mere extension of the form (rūpa) of Śakti. Śakti is fully immanent within space and time and yet wholly transcendent; thus she is free from any constraints these self generated conditions impose. She is both the material and efficient source of creation. Since the accomplished adept, at least in the role of guru, is considered completely identical to Śakti he or she has a mastery over creation not different from the goddess's. The spiritually

recognized adept is identical to the source of power itself and no longer constrained by the apparent limitations of time and space. When complete identity with Śakti is attained, the Śrīvidyā adept is considered a locus of the original source of power that created time and space but is not governed by any such limiting factors. The practical exercise of power is based upon the notion that its original source is not bound by the ordinary conventions of the dualistic world but merely assumes its form.

Why Śakti and Śiva, the original creative sources, consciously and deliberately chose this dualistic shape and set upon themselves limiting conditions by assuming forms within time and space is not an issue of particular interest in Śrīvidyā sources. If the theological position seems paradoxical or inconsistent, a resolution of doubts, Śrīvidyā maintains, comes when one achieves the religious experience its discipline and tradition teaches.

The most common way in which spiritual authority within lineages is acquired or recognized is direct transmission, that is, the open or implied designation of a spiritual leader (or heir) by an already established figure. The mantle of power is often handed down within lineages as select individuals are designated as the direct heirs of a guru's authority. Gurus effectively transfer their power and authority to a privileged disciple (or disciples) either

through formal ritual or in through an implicit bestowal on a privileged disciple. In other cases where power is not, as it were, transferred in a succession, the inspirational authority of a particular teacher remains the guiding force of a lineage so long as a memory of them persists. Lesser degrees of authority are also common, distinguishing "leaders" or "seniors" by criteria such as devotion to teacher and tradition, tenure, acknowledged spiritual accomplishment (siddhi), ritual expertise or punditry. In effect, the same basic criteria that gurus cite when selecting certain individuals as their heirs.

Though intellectual ability per se is usually not cited as a necessary quality for a traditional teacher, it is clear that the majority of recognized leaders are at least able scholars of their own lineage's ritual and theoretical interpretations. An ability to understand the meanings of key Sanskrit terms and an ability to use them ritually is usually the minimum level of learning. A few contemporary adepts displayed, however, an exceptional ability in Sanskrit and a thorough knowledge of the tradition's literature. Given the intellectual prowess of certain historical figures, the present situation is probably not exceptional; one suspects that the intellectual burdens of the tradition have always been carried by a few individuals and that the majority of adepts depend upon them for

developing interpretive and historical understanding.

The acquisition, transmission and recognition of authority is vital to Śrīvidyā's continuity and to its own understanding of what makes its teachings spiritually efficacious. The criteria used to make distinctions _within_ groups of initiates are the commonly recognized means of acquiring spiritual power, that is, moral discipline, ritual expertise and an exemplary lifestyle. Tantrics such as Śrīvidyā traditionalists do not create a "new" set of criteria but restate and stress those found in the non-Tantric and pre-Tantric forms of Indian faith.

The _Bhagavadgītā_, for example, is often cited by contemporary Srīvidyā adepts for its direction on these matters. Religious devotion (_bhakti_), yogic accomplishment (including restraint of the senses and an ascetical temperament), ritual and ethical action (_karma_) and spiritual and intellectual power (_jñāna_) form the foundations of authority. It is the recognition of these values in individuals that structures authority within sectarian Tantric traditions. To Śāktas all of these abilities or capacities stem from Śakti who is their primordial source. Since Śakti's power extends over not only the human realm but over all aspects of the natural universe, the accomplished adept too has a similar domain. The key notion, however, is that authority comes when the

mastery of such powers is recognized and interpreted by others: power itself may result from spiritual discipline but authority is a delegated privilege.

Recognition of religious authority is different than recognition of inherent or acquired spiritual power. The authority of a guru is dependent upon recognition of spiritual accomplishment and implies another form of power, that of direct influence over disciples in willful submission. An individual may be considered spiritually adept or vested with particular forms of expertise but the influence of him or her over others as an adept is of a different order than that of a guru over a lineage. The guru's actions or statements, be they mythical, implied or actual, have personal consequences for disciples and effect the transmission of the tradition. Spiritual power merely acknowledged in an individual does not empower them to teach the tradition: this entitlement is granted in the mutual relationship of guru and disciple. Consequently, all gurus are deemed spiritually adept but not all adepts are gurus. It is commonly believed that an accomplished adept may or may not choose to display spiritual prowess and that each has the ability to attract or dissuade individuals from approaching them for instruction.

A guru's influence may extend beyond the immediate realm of disciples and, in many cases, outlives the

historical personality. Thus the influence of the spiritually adept is not confined to a living repository or dependent upon the individual per se. Personal attributes such as emotional stability or ritual mastery lead to spiritual accomplishments (siddhi) that are inherently powerful since, like mantras or yantras, they are deemed a more "concentrated" form of Sakti than other forms within the ordinary world.

Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, views spiritual power not limited by space or time but located within them in the form of particular individuals, actions, objects or places. Authority is the influence or exercise of power "installed" in space and time and as it is acknowledged by others. When an individual is no longer living the effects of spiritual power and the legacy of authority may continue in relics, teachings or disciples, but in practical terms the nature of authority undergoes a dramatic change. The living guru effects direct control of over a course of historical events; as an interpreter of text or tradition his power is considered absolute by the disciple. The acquisition of power (siddhi) results in the systematic dissolution of the individuality of the guru as the state of liberation (mokṣa) is attained while yet living (jīvanmukti). By dissolving the transient personality the guru achieves immortality and an ability to influence events

in the natural and social worlds because he or she has ascended to a level of mastery comparable to the gods.

But in practical terms this power is diffused when the guru or spiritual adept no longer lives in the conventional world. The individual's power does not cease, it may continue either by transference or in relics, but the effective locus of authority changes: the "interpreting" living form becomes the more diffuse and less easily "interpreted" legacy or relic. Similarly, scriptures, which originate in authoritative sources such as Śiva or Śakti and are formulated at particular times and subject to similar effects, have only a diffuse form of power and authority and thus require interpretation from a more concentrated living source. Only the living teacher maintains this direct concentrated power and thus is an incontrovertible source of authority within a lineage. The living teacher takes precedence over all other forms of authority, including scripture, not because his power is of a different kind than others but because he is a more immediate and direct manifestation of the source of power. While living the guru is the quintessential interpreter, like scripture or oral tradition, he or she is also an object of interpretation in retrospect.

Tantrism's emphasis on secrecy can be understood as a result of this structure of authority. Texts or teachings

are secret because they instruct or are themselves considered repositories of power, that is, sources that reveal Śakti's concentrated forms. Gaining access to these sources of power is restricted because their instruction is inherently powerful while it is not necessarily controlled by the authority of a responsible guru. The guru alone decides what is appropriate for each student as well as how certain ideas are to be interpreted; secrecy is the means for effecting control over what might otherwise be misunderstood and "dangerous" to the uninitiated. Hence, Tantric sources are filled with technical and shadowy language purposely designed to conceal and restrict access to potentially dangerous sources of power. A Śrīvidyā adept provides an example:

> Mantras are inherently powerful even though the proper use of power also depends on the guru's initiation. They are a two-edged blade when complete. Without proper instruction, however, they are very dangerous just as a sword is dangerous without instruction in its use. The guru decides which mantra is appropriate for the disciple and then reveals its meanings and secrets. When mantras are printed in books the editor must say clearly that they should not be used without the proper instruction. The danger comes when this is either left out or unqualified people ignore the warnings. Sometimes rituals or mantras should not be printed at all because there is too much risk for misuse.[11]

It is also clear from these comments that secrecy is linked directly to notions of qualification (adhikāra). Qualification (adhikāra) has a textual basis and is a

primary topic in any discussion of initiation (dīkṣā).[12] But the decisive element in practical terms is the discretion of the guru; no matter what objective criteria are accepted as normative, qualification is dependent upon the structure of traditional authority which views the guru as ultimate arbiter.

1. This point is made several times in the Setubandha and implicitly in virtually all of Bhāskararāya's works. Cf., Setubandha's Introductory remarks.

2. Take, for example, the printed editions of Paraśurāmakalpasūtra which must be subject to interpolation according to those adepts who frown upon the pañcamakāras. Because these Śrīvidyā traditionalists cannot accept even the theoretical basis for the makāras they insist that the printed edition has not made a complete review of manuscripts or that their own manuscripts do not contain the "offensive" remarks. In this case it appears to be a matter of doctrinal certitude rather than an error in editing the text. The offended adepts have "sanitized" the text in a rather typical fashion to meet their own needs. The important point is twofold: (1) they wish to maintain a scriptural attribution to the PKS by rejecting its offensive portions but (2) accomplish this by attributing their inclusion to an error in the editing of the printed text. Works are considered scripture only when they meet the approval of the lineage's own tradition and it is not uncommon for the process to include this kind of "selective reading" or censorship.

3. In order to fulfill my vow to adepts to conceal their identities I have simply made up names for both individuals and groups for the profiles and other quotations that have been cited. A list of their real names, addresses and biographical details is available to the examiners. The point, however, is not that the material is authentic but that its being revealed was very much dependent on my relationship to Śrīvidyā tradition as an initiate. The inquisitive and even persistent scholar may not have been as fortunate as I was in the process of extracting interpretive materials. These interviews were usually viewed by the interviewee as "fair exchanges" or dialogues between initiates even when my own participation in the conversation was limited.

4. A significant number of interviews were conducted in English since Śrīvidyā adepts educated in public schools were often quite capable of expressing themselves fully in this medium. In Tamil Nāḍu, Tamil was the main language and it was Dr. Sundaramoorthy who often provided me with clarifications and technical assistance. Outside Tamil Nāḍu our main language was either English or Sanskrit. A fair number of interviews were conducted in the latter in northern and western India. For the technical meanings of Sanskrit terms we depended on our own oral traditions of interpretation, the historical textual sources and other

adepts---often disagreeing or altering according to our own critical standards. Whatever is presented, however, is documented either in conversation or in sources publicly available.

5. A senior adept of the "Guru" Mandali, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Naḍu, October, 1984.

6. A senior member of the "Siddha" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

7. "Nārada" of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

8. I should add as a footnote to this event that the host realized my donation to the project was limited to a gesture because afterwards it was clear, though not stated, that I personally did not approve of this rather expedient method of deciding who was qualified to participate. The host was gracious and not unsympathetic to my opinion but one could sense the disappointment. I was, after all, in a position to be a far more generous a patron. It was implied to all who accepted the invitation to attend the *pūjā* that some minimal contribution would be made; my limiting this to a gesture was the only means by which I could express my own sentiments without affecting the personal relationship.

It should also be observed that modern Hindus frequently determine who is a "Hindu" based on distinctly racial qualifications. Indians regardless of religious affiliation, for example, are never restricted access to Hindu temples, temple sanctums or the premises of Hindu religious organizations such as the Śaṅkara *mathas* in Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcipuram. In most instances a westerner such as myself is either questioned, given a privileged dispensation or excluded regardless of religious sentiments. One cannot but help feel these distinctions reflect poorly on the Hindu faith in general. In Kāñcipuram, for example, the administrators and patrons of the Śaṅkara *matha* restrict access to the *maṭha* and to the "taking of *darśan*" of the Saṅkarācārya---the common way of expressing respect for him and the tradition. But certain privileged westerners, in this case, myself excluded, are given a "special" dispensation. When I brought this decidedly racial discrimination to the attention of the Śaṅkarācārya himself, he offered no reply but made an exception for me (to the chagrin of the *matha*'s administrators). As far as it is known to me, the policy has not been changed. One can also be certain that the *matha* authorities would exclude low caste, poverty stricken Indians as well from the premises.

9. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

10. These are obviously highly sensitive matters that Indian women, in general, are reluctant to express openly to men even within their own families. I suspect that the general acquiescence on the part of the women I interviewed (even those with whom I had developed a personal relationship over a period of years) regarding these traditional practices does not always reflect their deepest feelings. Since few initiated women would discuss the matter freely it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to document what it is they do feel and think. The general impression, however, was that this kind of cultural "responsibility" carried into their lives as Śrīvidya initiates and there was never any suggestion that one could separate the initiated life from these "duties" (their vocabulary, not mine); also it was clear that observing these traditions was part of their total identity as women within the Brahmin caste whether or not they personally considered it repressive.

11. A Śrīvidyā adept belonging to a Madras-based lineage, January, 1985.

12. Cf., PKS, 1.14f.; HT, p.71-89 which gives extensive references.

Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition in South India
Chapter One
Lineage Profiles

A. Introductory Remarks on the Profiles of Living Śrīvidyā Lineages in South India

The groups selected for the composite profile of living Srīvidyā tradition organize themselves in three basic ways. They are either: (1) strictly private, maintaining an internal hierarchy with no formal public affiliations; (2) semi-private, maintaining the close knit secrecy of the oral tradition within an inner group of initiates but also engaging in activities that have a public dimension, such as publication or quasi-public ritual performances; or (3) formally public institutions with an internal hierarchy and private tradition that is engaged in public, open forms of worship and instruction of the tradition.

The most common term used by private groups of initiates to specify their formal relationship is maṇḍalī, literally, a "circle". Not all lineages prefer this term, or any other, but those engaging in semi-private activities invariably give themselves some formal designation. Other terms more common in historical patterns of sectarian affiliation such as sampradāya or mata are entirely absent in living tradition. But, as it has been observed, the general term used to specify a mode of conduct is not as

important as the qualifier, thus ācāra or "practice" gains its significance only when combined with a term such as Samaya or Kaula. Southern traditionalists, especially in Brahmin dominated groups, are reluctant to accept any of these more specific historical divisions. As one adept put it:

> The difficulty with saying that one is a Kaula or belongs to this or that sampradāya is that this can mean different things. Sometimes someone says that he belongs to this or that part of tradition and you are not able to say if this means he accepts or rejects certain practices normally associated with that interpretation. For example, is every Kaula actually practicing the use of the pañcamakāras ? No, but this seems to be a standard Kaula tradition if you accept the teaching of certain Tantras or even of Bhāskararāya.[1]

The reluctance the adept expresses above reflects the historical situation: what Śrīvidyā adepts have said about themselves, how they designate their own practice and what they say today, either verbally or in written forms, does not necessarily reflect their practice; nor is the meaning of any common traditional term necessarily interpreted identically between groups. This explains why such terms are continuously redefined in historical works. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts are themselves aware of the discrepancies involved in the historical use of traditional descriptions and designations. Yet in spite of these difficulties there is observable continuity in practice

between contemporary groups differing significantly on theological issues; groups that use the same terms of identification in different ways. How lineages describe themselves and others is crucial to an understanding of where they locate themselves in Śrīvidyā's history and in the broader spectrum of modern Hindu faith.

The profiles of Śrīvidyā lineages given below place each private group of initiates within the historical and theological tradition and give an outline of each group's distinctive interpretations and attitudes. In the first profile a greater emphasis has been laid on examining features common to the majority of groups though this particular group does not necessarily express the opinions of the majority on all issues.

I cannot hope to record all the details of my meetings or give intimate portraits of the adepts I interviewed. The materials included are intended to present an interpretive context for the normative values and concepts of the tradition set forth in Part One. Those points of view particular to individual lineages, groups or individuals are contrasted with views expressed by the majority. This is not to suggest that the majority opinion is in any way more "correct" than others but rather is viewed as a guide to what might be deemed the "normative" living tradition.

It is clear, however, that there is no such thing as a

"typical" Śrīvidyā adept anymore than one can stereotype any committed religious person whose personality has shaped and made vital the tenets of his or her faith. There *are* theological positions and ritual practices shared by a majority, but the majority position does not necessarily imply that the given interpretation is veridical or that one is a more authentic representative of text or tradition than another. As one would expect, in most cases lineages and individuals share common opinions but distinguish themselves on particular issues. No single group maintains all aspects of the emerging normative view and hence there is no one standard against which others are measured. The normative view reflects simply the most common interpretive position on a given issue across the whole tradition. Which position reflects textual, historical and oral tradition best is a judgement reached only through critical analysis and comparison.

From the scholarly perspective in many instances there is simply no "correct" view, but only the tradition's multifarious manifestations and interpretations. For each group and individual their own interpretive stance is held to be *the* correct rendering of Śrīvidyā tradition or, at least, the one most suited to their own personal religious needs. Sharp distinctions are drawn within the tradition and clear doctrinal definitions pit one group against

another. Living Śrīvidyā traditions continue to engage doctrines and practices with intensity and self assurance in their own faithful interpretations.

Following the profiles is a section addressing specific issues, such as the ritual variations in the worship of the śrīcakra, followed by an analysis of the interaction of private groups and individuals with non-initiates. The majority of initiates of the groups represented here are south Indians and are all based in Tamil Nāḍu. Northern groups and those from other states are handled separately.

B. Śrīvidyā Lineages: Profiles of Faith

PROFILE 1: "Gāyatrī" Mandali

"Gāyatrī" Mandali does not trace its lineage to Bhāskararāya or any other significant historical figure but considers itself part of the Kaula Śrīvidyā tradition. It accepts basic Kaula tenets such as the theoretical ritual use of the five makāras and therefore does not censor its scriptures in an effort to bring them in line with the mores of Brahmin society. The guru around which this semi-private group centers itself was a smārta Brahmin and spent the last years of his life living ascetically but married to a tribal woman of the Narmada hill region. His out of caste marriage was said to have been approved in a vision of the sage Agastya, traditionally associated with the Narmada forest

hill region. His own teacher is also considered a powerful and well-known yogi and lived his entire life in the householder's āśrama. The lineage traces itself back at least four generations to gurus who have personally designated a spiritual leader (or leaders) as heir(s) to the line of authority. At present the group divides authority between the guru's widow and his most intimate disciple.

The group formally identified itself as a Mandali while the guru was still living, obtained his permission to publish a private journal and gathered occasionally to discuss theological and ritual matters. They openly refer to themselves as Tantrics, consciously recognizing the term's negative connotations in vernacular Tamil. Their chief characteristic, however, is the claim that Śrīvidyā is the "original" Vedic truth and that the tradition is the most "purely Vedic" among Hindu practices. (Not a claim that is in any way extraordinary if one were considering a non-Tantric group.) They identify the śrīvidyā with the Vedic gāyatrī, as is common to all Śrīvidyā, but insist on initiation into the gāyatrī as a preliminary to Śrīvidyā initiation.

Their interpretation of what "Vedic" tradition entails has important consequences on practice and the lineage's transmission. Acknowledging the Tantras as śrūti, they do not censure materials by subject but consider only those

taught or mentioned by their guru as authoritative. As a general policy all Kaula works of the Śrīkula are potential theological or ritual resources. Following the normative belief, however, only those ideas accepted by the guru are considered "fit" for interpretation and practice; others are either irrelevant, do not "apply" to Śrīvidyā in its "correct" understanding or are openly rejected.

Among contemporary groups this particular Mandali was theoretically more willing to place themselves in conflict with established Brahmanical values, though in practice this Brahmin dominated group did not purposefully seek out controversy. While posing themselves as somewhat extraordinary at both social and religious levels they, in fact, conform in nearly all respects to the behavioral norms of Tamil Brahmin society.

Their major textual sources are the four key Srividya Tantras, PKS (but with neither Rāmeśvara's commentary or NS considered authoritative), the Śākta Upaniṣads (especially Tripurā and Bhavaṇā Upaniṣads) and certain other Kaula sources, such as Kulārṇava Tantra. But, like all groups tracing themselves to a common lineage, the focus of their textual interest lies in their own ritual handbook (paddhati). This voluminous work is subject to abbreviation in practice. Nonetheless it sets the standards for ritual practice and implicitly includes all materials considered

theologically acceptable, as well as specialized mantric formulations.

These ritual sourcebooks are the key to understanding not only the practice of the Śrīvidyā adept or lineage but provide, to some extent, the details of accepted theology. Wholly unpretentious in content and offering little self explanation (which is given orally), the paddhatis reveal what is acceptable practice and what is not, if only by omission. Following patterns very similar in content and presentation to such classics as the PKS, NS and SRA, a lineage's paddhati prescribes a ritual for nearly every occasion. The paddhati does not necessarily indicate how particular elements included in the ritual tradition are interpreted or actually practiced. This comes only through oral interpretation and instruction. Occasionally the omission of a particular subject from the written text reflects a deliberate effort to maintain secrecy but since such texts are usually (but not always) meant solely for private use they offer a remarkable wealth of doctrinal and ritual material. To the uninitiated the ritual handbook appears as little more than a series of mantras and ritual indications. But to an initiate skilled in the theological and historical tradition, the paddhati is the best single sourcebook for understanding an individual or group's interpretation of key ritual or doctrinal points. If

reviewed with the practitioner's oral explanation, a *paddhati* often traces back to Sanskrit sources in the broader tradition (such as *PKS*, *NS* or *JT*) and reveals a particular tradition's synthesis and condensation of abstract principles through structure and method of presentation.

Not all present members of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali have been initiated by the guru. Holding the *ṣoḍaśī* as the supreme form of *śrīvidyā*, senior members of the group have initiated their own family members and others into the worship of the *pañcadaśī* as well as the *śrīcakra*. The "burden and responsibility" of initiation into the *ṣoḍaśī* now falls on the widow of the guru who is the titular head of the group though not directly responsible for any of its publication or discussion activities.

The leadership of the group falls more directly on one of the senior disciples of the guru, "Agastya". He is a Sanskrit scholar, expert in Tantric texts and rituals and well known practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine in Madras. His interpretations of oral and written tradition set the standard for all other members of the Mandali though his personal fame as a Śrīvidyā adept and "spiritual personality" is limited in comparison to the now deceased guru. Curiously, this central figure within the Brahmin dominated Mandali is not a *smārta* Śaiva by birth but an

Aiyangar Śrīvaiṣṇava. "Agastya" is, as it were, a convert to Śrīvidyā. He explains:

> In personal faith I am a Śrīvidyā upāsaka. My guru was the reason I became involved. As soon as I met him I was convinced that he was the only guru I could ever follow, he was spiritually a very powerful man. So I asked to become his disciple and took up Śrīvidyā. This was over twenty years ago. In family custom I continue to follow the aiyangar traditions including the [thick cotton form of the] sacred thread and the traditions of my own Vedic śākha. My immediate family have all been initiated by me into Śrīvidyā and my youngest son has been married to the daughter of my guru. This union shows that we make no caste distinctions and, actually, we consider it a privilege to have her in our family. No members of our [caste] community have ever given us any difficulty for this or other practices since our Śrīvidyā practice is a private, family matter. My daughters are married into other aiyangar families since maintaining caste in these social situations is usually the approved way. Otherwise caste is not our way of deciding equality. All Śrīvidyā initiates are equal.[2]

The social contacts of the Mandali's members, however, are almost exclusively limited to other Brahmins. Like all Brahmin dominated Śrīvidyā groups or individual Brahmin initiates, it is clear that the members of this Mandali would not accept or would make efforts to avoid cooked food (even vegetarian food) or water in the homes of non-Brahmins and would most certainly maintain other caste distinctions regarding marriage and other customs. Caste equality is distinct from the equality of initiation which transcends caste inequality. In this case Śrīvidyā initiates may be

considered equals but not non-Brahmins outside the fold.

As part of their interpretation of Śrīvidyā as the "true" faith of the Veda and in accordance with their belief that the Tantras "restore" these original religious truths and practices, the "Gāyatrī" Mandali specifies that only twice-borns (dvija) may practice Śrīvidyā. By this, however, they mean any person who has received initiation into the Vedic gāyatrī mantra and wears the sacred thread (yajñopavita, or poonal, as it is called in Tamil). All members of the group, men or women, wear the sacred thread and daily perform the obligatory sandhyavandana rituals associated with it. The initiation of women into the Vedic gāyatrī, usually reserved for men, is not only extraordinary but one of the Mandali's means of establishing a ritual and spiritual equality between sexes. Gender equality begins, as it were, with this notion that the Vedic tradition prescribes the gāyatrī and the sacred thread for both sexes--- an interpretation that is disputed by other Vaidikas. All customs concerning the maintenance of thread and Vedic mantra are kept as well, including such regional practices as the manner of its wear, periodic changing and composition.

Initiated women maintain no periods of pollution concerning obligatory rites (nityakarma) regarding either Vedic or specifically Śrīvidyā rituals but do not

participate in the important occasional rites (naimittika) such as śrīcakra worship on the full moon day if they are, for one reason or another, in a state of ritual pollution. The same appears true for men, though their occasions of ritual pollution are rarer and less predictable (such as the case of death in the immediate family).

The group acknowledges a hierarchy of mantric initiation that corresponds loosely to levels of spiritual achievement bestowed on individuals by their seniority in initiation or special expertise. The hierarchy is the usual one found in Śrīvidyā's oral tradition (as given in Chapter Six, Part One) though in this case is designed specifically to include the Vedic gāyatrī as the initial level of entry. In the process of mantra initiation an individual accepted into the Mandali is first given the Vedic gāyatrī if as a male chile he did not undergo upanayana. Female children, who do not ordinarily undergo upanayana, go through the ceremony within the "Gāyatrī" Mandali just as the boys do. Women if they did not come originally from the families of established adepts are first initiated with sacred thread and Vedic gāyatrī and afterwards given initiation into the Śrīvidyā mantras. Following this inclusion of the Vedic gāyatrī as prerequisite to further initiation, the mantras in hierarchical succession from "lower" to "higher" levels of qualification are then given, that is, the mantras of

Gaṇapati, Subrahmaṇya (which aspect was not specified), Bālātripurasundarī, and finally the pañcadaśī and ṣoḍaśī form of kādi śrīvidyā.

The practice common to all contemporary traditions is to give all the mantras up to Bālātripurasundarī at the initial level and to determine the qualification for pañcadaśī on a merit basis. On most occasions this too has been predetermined and an initiate does not have to "wait" to receive the śrīvidyā. Though ṣoḍaśī śrīvidyā was given to every member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, the members insisted that the "leap" from the pañcadaśī form was also entirely based on spiritual merit.

"Gāyatrī" Mandali, like all other contemporary lineages and individuals, maintains only the kādi version of the mantra and traces itself to the Kāmeśvara parampara. According to "Agastya", the Mandali's acknowledged authority on theoretical and ritual matters, the distinction between kādi- and hādimatas is only "mantrawise" and does not entail any doctrinal or other ritual differences. (This would appear to agree with historical fact.) He explained a further kādi/hādi distinction thus:

> Since kādi is the mantra of Kāmeśvara it is reserved for those who by nature lack the Sakti, female aspect in their spiritual personality. This is not determined by one's sex. The Kāmeśvara mantra reflects this "opposite" power while the Lopamudrā [hādividyā] is a more concentrated form of Śiva, the male aspect. Each person's personality is dominated by one or the

> other and most need more of the Śakti aspect. This accounts for the majority using only kādi śrīvidyā.[3]

This explanation found no corroboration and cannot be verified in any written historical tradition. It is worth noting because it is the only explanation maintained by an entire lineage concerning the kādi/hādi mantra distinction and, indeed, one of the few efforts made to explain why these two forms of the śrīvidyā have predominated tradition.

As it is for all initiates, the mantra of Bālātripurasundarī is considered prefatory but not necessary---it may be by-passed if the initiate is deemed qualified. In practice, initiation into the "Bālā mantra" is very rare and almost never a final stage in discipleship. Some groups maintain that initiation into the higher forms of śrīvidyā, such as pañcadaśī or ṣoḍaśī, automatically qualifies the adept for the "lower" Bālātripurasundarī mantra. Hence initiation is given into the mantra by those who actually never formally received the mantra from their guru.

On one occasion an adept not related to the "Gāyatrī" Mandali claimed that initiation into the "Bālā mantra" came in a dream (or vision) of the goddess. This initiation was then followed by an initiation into the pañcadaśī by Lalitā herself. Dreams or visions in which initiation occurs are not an uncommon means of gaining access to Śrīvidyā but do

not often occur within established lineages. One such occasion was recounted:

> I had been told in a dream, I do not know exactly by whom, that I should return to my native village and worship Devī there in the small temple. I went as soon as possible and sat for a long time before her image. I fell deep into meditation when she appeared before me. Śrīdevī was seated before me on a throne and told me that I should do japa of Her mantra every day so that I might gain liberation in this life. She then recited the śrīvidyā and disappeared.[4]

Along with mantra initiation is usually some ritual instruction into the worship of the śrīcakra or the anthropomorphic image of Śakti. This commonly takes shape as a gradual process of increasing ritual sophistication learned over an extended period of instruction. In "Gāyatrī" Mandali, as is often the case, the less experienced initiates receive abbreviated forms of ritual which are expanded into ever larger formats. The abbreviated forms are taken from the larger ritual handbook (paddhati) and are usually compressed forms of the full ritual procedure of śrīcakra worship. Ritual instruction usually includes theological training but this does not appear mandatory. In many cases initiates learn only the bear essentials of the symbology and interpretation of mantric and yantric forms of ritual. In "Gāyatrī" Mandali, for example, ritual training takes a priority while the majority of theological training is given in group meetings.

In other Mandalis more extensive theological training precedes initiation into the mantra and the presentation of a śrīcakra as a personal ritual object.

Another feature of "Gāyatrī" Mandali's "Vedic" interpretation is its rejection of sannyāsa as an accepted stage (āśrama) in the Hindu life. Claiming no precedent for renunciation in the Vedas, the Mandali asserts that sannyāsa is contrary to the spirit of the Tantras which also reject it.[5] The original emergence of renunciation and its acceptance among Hindus is blamed, like most of the concepts this Mandali rejects, on the influence of Buddhists and other non-Vedic sects. They view their task as eliminating and "purifying" Śrīvidyā of these elements and thus producing a pristine form of Hindu faith more consonant with the "undefiled" meaning of the Vedas. Feelings run so strongly against the Buddhists, for example, that in the ṣaḍdarśanavidyā, a portion of the śrīcakra pūjā designed to praise key mantras and teachings of six traditional viewpoints (darśana), the initial spot commonly reserved for Bauddha darśana and the mantra of the female bodhisattva Tara, is filled by the Vedic god Sūrya and a Sūrya mantra.

This position contrasts sharply with every other group with whom I had contact. Others may have not accepted Buddhist views but were not averse to "showing respect", as they termed it, towards the Buddhist tradition and Buddhist

female divinities; this position is in keeping, they affirmed, with the tolerant and embracing attitude of ŚrĪvidyā and Tantrism in general. Even when disagreeing on important doctrinal points with the Buddhists, the vast majority of adepts expressed deep admiration for the figure of Śākyamuni: a ŚrĪvidyā adept can "accept" as valuable such texts or traditions without actually "following" them. To "GāyatrĪ" Mandali, however, there could be no compromise: the Buddhists and those "influenced" by them could be given absolutely no place in ŚrĪvidyā. Such "heretical" notions as formal renunciation they consider anathema to the true interpretation of the Vedas.

Consequently, all of "GāyatrĪ" Mandali's members are married and none would consider taking formal renunciatory vows. Sexual abstinence was not viewed upon as a virtue (a somewhat remarkable fact considering the position of many Tantras on the subject of "withholding the semen") though the simple, ascetical life was praised within the contexts of marriage.

Unlike other Brahmins, the members of "GāyatrĪ" Mandali expressed no aversion to the remarriage of widows but generally rejected sexual relations outside marriage as unacceptable. Marriage is said to reflect the divine relationship of Śiva and Śakti and each partner is instructed to worship the other as an embodiment of the

divine image. Though it is theoretically maintained that in the practice of the fifth makāra, sexual union (maithuna), there is scope for an intimate sexual relationship within strict ritual contexts, this practice has not been part of the Mandali's tradition. The fifth makāra, it is maintained, is qualitatively different than the other four; its appropriateness, unlike the other four, is a matter left to the discretion of the guru. This position would appear to coincide with the views of Bhāskararāya.[6]

According to "Agastya", however, the Mandali's theoretical acceptance of the five makāras does not mean anyone in the present group is deemed qualified for their literal use. In fact, a series of substitutions (pratinidhi) for each makāra was observed in the performance of ritual. For example, for wine was substituted a concoction of milk, honey, ginger and other "non-objectionable" elements. Though it was clear that other members of the Mandali considered "Agastya" and the guru's wife both as qualified to use the primary (mukhya) element of the makāras in ritual practice, the actual employment of these elements was never witnessed. There appears sufficient evidence to conclude that the makāras are not a part of even extraordinary private rites. All initiated members, however, maintain the theoretical legitimacy of the makāras as within Vedic tradition ("...the Āryans, you know, were not vegetarians or

teetotalers..."7) and continue to employ substitutes (specified in the paddhati) including maithuna which is externally restricted to a mudrā.

In practice, however, it seemed out of the range of possibilities that any upper caste initiate of any known lineage would actually consume a prohibited substance such as meat or wine or engage in any activity that would cause caste or community problems, even under ritual circumstances. The theoretical acceptance of a controversial Tantric practice is clearly a different issue than its performance and the solution most commonly employed by Kaula traditionalists is a substitution of elements. In some cases it was said that the guru (no longer living and thus beyond social opprobrium) did, in fact, make use of the pañcamakāras or perform the literal worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna, but that this practice was no longer done because no one was qualified. Others rejected these practices either because of potentially scandalous repercussions should even rumors emerge publicly or because of the potential for "misuse" by adepts.

In their acceptance of the interpretive concepts of non-dualism common to the Śākta Tantras, "Gāyatrī" Mandali strongly rejects Śaṅkara's advaita and disassociates itself from the Śaṅkara tradition. Accusing Śaṅkara and his followers of being crypto-Buddhists (pracannabauddha)(not an

uncommon accusation even among historical figures such as Madhva), the smārta Brahmins of this Mandali remain completely aloof from the common practice among south Indian smārtas to identify with the Śaṅkara pīṭhas in either Śṛṅgeri or Kāñcipuram. They likewise reject Śaṅkara's reputed authorship of SL and other Śākta related works, but do so to meet their own theological agenda rather than on historical or literary critical grounds.

The Mandali publishes its own journal for private circulation to which only its members contribute. While members have developed close personal friendships with members of other organized Śrīvidyā groups, they express relatively little interest in other forms of Śrīvidyā. Like other Śrīvidyā adepts, however, many members have gained a reputation for religious expertise in general, especially regarding the use of mantras.

In one remarkable case a "Gāyatrī" Mandali member withheld informing a close friend of his own Śrīvidyā initiation for some twenty years despite knowing this friend to be an initiate of another Mandali. He offered me this information (which I later verified through other sources) as an example of the privacy of the tradition; there was simply "no reason why" he should discuss his own practice unless specifically asked. (They now discuss historical and textual matters openly but seemingly avoid points of

potential controversy.) Across Śrīvidyā traditions one frequently encounters this phenomenon: adepts simply keeping the tradition to themselves unless directly questioned about their affiliations. I have never encountered an instance of an adept denying involvement when confronted with the question, but one must often ask a specific question to elicit a response.[8] The practice of Śrīvidyā remains a private affair even when it is not maintained as a secret.

A strong emphasis is laid within "Gāyatrī" Mandali on ritual elaboration, especially in the form of songs composed in Sanskrit and adjoined to rites such as the bi-monthly _śrīcakra pūjā_. _Pūjās_ performed by members go on for up to seven hours characterized by frequent intervals of song and silent meditation.

The daily rituals considered obligatory (_nitya_) vary from lineage to lineage but oral tradition maintains that the _śrīvidyā_ (and all other mantras that are actively recited (_upāsana_)) must be repeated a minimum of twelve times a day. This minimum requirement is usually more than satisfied and adepts within the "Gayatri" and other Mandalis frequently set aside a specific period of meditative worship in the morning following their bath.[9]

In the case of all Mandalis and individuals it would appear rare for a complete _śrīcakra pūjā_ to be performed everyday in the same manner in which it is done occasionally

(*naimittika*), though there is no oral or written prescription against such practice. Daily meditation (*bhāvaṇā*), however, is actually an adumbrated form of the longer worship, and in some cases is a short form of the elaborate *pūjā* performed without any external compliments, that is as an internal (*antar-*) rather than an external sacrifice (*bahiryāga*). The daily regimen usually includes at a minimum an invocation of Gaṇapati for prophylactic purposes, purificatory rites including a yoga oriented breath control in the form of *bhūtaśuddhi* and, most importantly, a silent meditation (*japa*) of the *śrīvidyā*.[10] The time spent may be no more than ten to thirty minutes and concludes with a display of ritual gestures (*mudrās*) and the offering (*upācāra*) of some auspicious substance (such as fresh food or flowers) to the image of Devī or the *śrīcakra*. The long ritual prescriptions that outline a complete course of daily activity found in such works as *PKS* and *SRK* are abbreviated. The most common method is an abridgement of the full form of *śrīcakra pūjā* as it is prescribed in a lineage's ritual handbook (*paddhati*). Only rarely does a lineage keep a separate shortened rite within the *paddhati* and the abridgement often differs among adepts of the same lineage depending upon the personal instructions of the guru. Once again, the structure of ritual and practice is almost entirely at the discretion of the guru. Some adepts

either by Samayācāra heritage or by instruction perform no external ritual (bahiryāga) at all, either daily or on an occasional basis. Occasional rites (naimittika karma), however, are rarely foregone completely except by strict Samayācārins who have dispensed with externals for a completely internal, mental form of ritual sacrifice (antaryāga).

Despite claims by "Gāyatrī" Mandali's initiates (including women adepts) that their interpretation of Śrīvidyā is purposefully designed to promote the "equality" of women, in practice their gender roles rigorously conform to the conventions of Tamil Brahmin society. Women are initiated and considered in specified ritual contexts as equals but even in these cases wives defer ritual responsibilities to husbands and limit their participation when male members are present. As one woman explained:

> My husband and I are equal as initiates but I believe he is my spiritual superior. This is not because he is male but because of his own practice. But if we were truly at the same level I would still prefer for him to perform the pūjā and conduct most of the ritual activities. This is because I am busy preparing the food for naivedya offerings and doing other things. I am participating fully in the puja but in a different manner than him. This is what is right for its complete success and as a husband and wife.[11]

This self-proclaimed "feminist" is a conservative Brahmin women who feels an obligation and a willingness to abide by the roles of her cultural tradition. Her equality

remains at the level of spiritual initiation and manifests in privileges of seniority, such as a priority seat during a group ritual or the opportunity for interpretive contribution, affecting all adepts within the lineage initiated after her. In other respects, however, this woman, an accomplished Śrīvidyā ritualist and classical singer, conforms rigorously to the social and religious conventions of Tamil Brahmin society. She often, for example, gives public lectures on general religious matters (never, she says, revealing that she is a Śrīvidyā initiate or discussing in public the details of Śrīvidyā's discipline) or concerts of classical music but defers to the judgement of her husband on the appropriateness of a given opportunity. In effect, her relationship to her husband and other males is not especially peculiar except within the ritual contexts of the lineage. Other women in the Mandali have a less visible role in public as well as a more limited part in the inner workings of the group but all maintain that they are not essentially different from male members with regard to spiritual achievement or seniority. All seem content with (or resigned to?) their position in the structure of the extended family and seek no public distinction between themselves as women Śrīvidyā initiates and other Brahmin women. Their sense of personal, spiritual privilege as full members of religious elite was certainly

clear but did not carry into ordinary social contexts. As one female member put it:

> We are extraordinary in the spiritual and religious sense, that is true. But this need not affect the way others view us. It would cause too many problems to reject or revolt against values that we really believe. Our aim is to show that women are spiritual equals and that in sādhana there is no difference between men and women. It does not really matter who performs the rituals and since I do the cooking, for example, it is more convenient for me to prepare the upācāra and naivedya than to sit for the pūjā as my husband does. I am no less equal and no less a participant in the benefits of pūjā. For me the cooking and attending to other duties is the pūjā. I may sing or be asked to perform certain ritual functions but these are simply part of my role. I do not consider my duties as wife or mother as inequality.[12]

PROFILE 2: "Ānanda" Mandali

"Ānanda" Mandali is also a semi-private group though its publication and ritual activities seek more actively to engage outside participants. The center of the present group is a guru, deceased now about fifteen years, whose reputation as a scholar of Sanskrit and Hindu tradition continues up to the present in his prolific writings and beyond the confines of Śrīvidyā. With the guru's demise the Mandali underwent a major split due primarily it seems to a conflict in personalities between the closest disciple "Nārada" and the guru's own initiated son. The major activities of "Ānanda" Mandali today are solely the work of

"Nārada", his immediate family and associates. They claim the guru's son no longer displays an active interest because his father's books are no longer a source of income. The guru's son maintains that the activities of the organized group no longer reflect the wishes of his father. It is true, however, that there is no longer any publication or semi-private ritual activity continued by the guru's son despite his father's active role. Despite these conflicts there is an uneasy peace between "Nārada" and the guru's son (but little love lost) and little mention made of other when discussing the life and work of the Mandali's guru.

"Ānanda" Mandali also claims a Kaula Tantric heritage and accepts in theory the ritual appropriateness of the pañcamakāras. In practice, no member of the Mandali engages in any such activities nor suggests their presence in the semi-public rituals the group sponsors. Like "Gāyatrī" Mandali and the majority of other south Indian Śrīvidyā lineages, "Ānanda" Mandali's traditions are passed almost exclusively among smārta Brahmins. They maintain no strict caste restrictions and theoretically reject any discrimination based on caste or gender but, like others, conform to the conventions of "orthodoxy" in all but strictly spiritual matters.

While not claiming a descent from Bhāskararāya, the Mandali frequently defers to his interpretive authority.

The guru's published work, consisting of original commentaries and translations into Tamil of KKV and SL as well as a host of mantric compilations and detailed ritual handbooks (paddhati), cites Bhāskararāya and Amrtananda as major interpretive sources and in other unattributed instances reflects their opinions.

The guru of "Ānanda" Mandali as well as the present active organization exhibits more of the tolerance evinced in Bhāskararāya. The guru's works are liberally sprinkled with citations from across Tantric tradition and pay little attention to sectarian differences or disputes. By identifying Śrīvidyā with Kaula Tantrism and maintaining a positive view towards the Śaṅkara tradition (accepting SL and other works as authentic), "Ānanda" Mandali draws upon vast resources of literature to elaborate its interpretations; the Mandali reflects, what might best be termed, a spirit of inclusion. There is little material within the corpus of Tantric or Vedic literature that brings open disapproval from the group though, like others, they maintain the prerogative to read "selectively". In other words, while virtually any source can be included in the tradition's interpretive structure, only select portions are deemed authoritative. As Kaulas, however, they do not censure materials objectionable to Samayācārins.

Another characteristic of this Mandali's reading of

standard Tantric works in Sanskrit is their propensity to give a regional flavor to interpretation. No other group has published works so clearly intending to make them accessible to those lacking a knowledge of Sanskrit. It is clear though that even "Nārada" has but limited knowledge of original Sanskrit materials and relies upon the guru's published works and on the expertise of others. The guru's Tamil translations and commentaries attempt to draw examples from local lore and relate text and practice to particular places and historical persons from within Tamil Nāḍu. Regarding the Saundaryalaharī, for example, the guru cites the story of Śaṅkara composing the work before the image of the goddess Akhilandeśvarī near Tiruchirapalli. Ritual practices are also given a strong regional flavor; the guru specifies, for example, that the śrīcakra pūjā is to be performed to mark events on the traditional Tamil calender.

New works continue to be published by "Nārada" in the name of the Mandali bearing the initiated name (dīkṣānāma) of the guru. The principal effort is ritual handbook entitled Śrīcakrarcanadipikā, a slightly revised version of the paddhati published by "Nārada"'s guru some forty years ago. The work is continuously updated by appendices proffering further ritual elaborations (for example, a recent addition listing the one thousand and eight names of Bālātripurasundarī as a supplement to worship comparable to

the ritual recitation of the LSN) but the core of śrīcakra worship is structurally identical to that of the majority of Śrīvidyā adepts from at least the ninth century.[13]

This paddhati, however, is different in at least one important respect from that of of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali or most other privately published efforts: it is intended to be available to the public. I have discovered it in book stores throughout Tamil Nāḍu though it is, for all intents and purposes, the identical type of work that for generations has been permitted to pass only between initiates. "Nārada" explained that the group's intention was not that anyone should buy the paddhati and practice its rituals without initiation but that since so many Śrīvidyā initiates have clamored for an easily available ritual reference he felt called to bring this text forward again in the name of his teacher. Emphasizing that his guru had an enormous following and that nearly all contemporary adepts had either been influenced or at least been aware of the guru's life and work, "Nārada" responded that the public availability of the paddhati would naturally draw only those with a special interest. "Nārada's" point concerning his teacher's influence in the past fifty years and the number of initiates appears at least superficially justified. The matter seems to touch at the heart of the secrecy issue:

> We do not urge people to buy this book and believe that only those with a natural urge to be

> interested in this form of spirituality will acquire it. Of those who spend money for it, only a few will take the time to look into it, others will just want to have it---sometimes they do not even know the reason why. To make it available is a service that Gurudev [i.e., his teacher] would approve because he felt, as we do, that Śrīvidyā is for the welfare of all, not only for the initiated. Not everyone can practice what is in this book but those who do will be those most qualified. If some who are unqualified try to use it they will not be able to succeed: Devī or Śiva will cause them to lose interest or will prevent them from continuing. Is it secret? Not really because only those able to understand the secrets will know how to make use of it; for those who merely wish to own it, or have in their *pūjā* room, or offer a flower to it as a tribute to Śrīvidyā and to the greatness of the guru, then there is no harm. This promotes Śrīvidyā but it does not lessen its power or make it common for all. But at one level Srīvidyā *is* meant to be for everyone, printing this book only makes it clear that there is nothing to hide and much to learn from it.[14]

"Nārada" argues that the tradition, as it were, protects itself, either by divine intervention ("...Śiva will cause them...") or by the very nature of the teaching. What he fails to mention is that the text does not come with "instructions", the Mandali does not publish a "how to" manual but merely the ritual specifications with mantras and technical directions. It is comparable to an architect's plans without the written or oral specifications necessary to proceed with the actual building. Of course, a curious person could try to bring the ritual to life without initiated training, but "Nārada" strongly contends that this simply will not occur and if it is attempted the absence of

proper initiation will cut the effort short. His colleague made this comparison:

> Practicing the śrīcakra pūjā only from the book is like trying to make [sic] an atom bomb when you have only the plans but none of the needed materials [sic]. Even if you gather all the materials you still need something very special and difficult to obtain, the radioactive uranium. This is like the guru's initiation, it gives you the crucial power to make the ritual complete. But without the guru's teaching and giving the initiation there is only the shell and no harm can come from it; the same with the atom bomb, you see, no uranium, no bomb. Śrīvidyā does not approve usually of obtaining initiation in unspecified ways or without the explicit direction of a guru.[15]

"Agastya" of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, a long time personal associate of "Nārada" expressing some reservations about the public availability of the "Ānanda" Mandali's ritual manuals, noted that he was not as convinced that works such as the "Ānanda" paddhati would be immune to abuse or that inexperienced persons might not cause themselves harm by trying to practice the contents. "Nārada" is quick to point out that the paddhati does preserve the most essential aspect of mantric secrecy by withholding the actual form of the śrīvidyā. While all other mantric formulas are given clearly in the text, each instance for the use of the śrīvidyā is marked only by the term "root" (mūla), a code indicating the recital of the "root mantra" (mūlamantra). This common indication of the śrīvidyā effectively limits the "misuse" of the text and "protects"

the unwary. "Nārada" explains:

> Even if someone knows about mantraśāstra but does not belong to Śrīvidyā he will not misuse the book because he will know better. For others with no knowledge of the mantraśāstra but with an interest in these things, the most secret form is still concealed and this prevents them from doing themselves any damage.[16]

"Nārada", like many other contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts, sees no intrinsic harm in publishing ritual works that have been preserved in the past only privately. In fact, it seems clear that the "Ānanda" Mandali would like to make available an increasing number of mantric works and strongly feels its publications are a service not only to Śrīvidyā tradition but to the world at large. "Nārada" expresses a sentiment shared by a number of contemporary adepts:

> Śrīvidyā is for the welfare of the world. Whenever we personally perform a pūjā it effects not only the upāsaka and others he asks Devī to bless, it effects the whole spiritual world. At the end of the pūjā one says, "whatever I have done or failed to do, let us work for the benefit of the world (lokasamgraha)". This shows that Śrīvidyā is performed for the sake of everyone and it has not been designed for selfish purposes. Śrīvidyā upāsakas must have the highest standards of morality or else their tradition has taught them nothing. You do not see these moral teachings preached in the ritual handbooks, they must be part of the upāsaka's personality long before he performs pūjā.[17]

Even those maintaining a strictly private practice without public dimensions comparable to the "Ānanda" Mandali will insist that whatever Śrīvidyā ritual they perform has a

positive effect on the "spiritual environment" of the entire world. On one occasion a private Śrīvidyā fire sacrifice (homa) was performed to encourage world peace.[18] Śrīvidyā has always maintained that its rituals have consequences beyond the immediate sphere of the adept performing them but these instances indicate the extent to which contemporary adepts consider ritual performances influential in the larger social and political environment. Ritual's transformative effects are not considered limited to those involved directly in the performance and may, in fact, be directed at individuals (or even governments) completely uninvolved and unsuspecting.

This interpretation of the efficacy of ritual and mantras harkens back to a more archaic form of Vedism; a more mechanical view, if you will, of the way nature and society can be molded, manipulated and influenced by what is said and done in certain ritual contexts. Rituals and mantras are deemed inherently powerful and their proper performance, at least to some degree, insures the desired result.

But this position cannot suffice to explain the complexity of the tradition's understanding of ritual. Adepts insist that personal transformation is ultimately the result of knowledge (jñāna), an internal realization that

effectively changes worldly experience, and yet they likewise emphasize the inherent effects of ritual and mantras in particular. This position reflects not only the soteriology of Vedic ritual but incorporates and synthesizes the post-Upaniṣadic emphasis on knowledge, individual self-effort and moral conduct. Liberation as well as spiritual and material satisfaction depend on a combination of elements, including the maintenance of the ritual efficacy of mantras and a personal transformative experience.

Adding to the complexity of the tradition's incorporation of spiritual and worldly aims, adepts are also quick to emphasize that the ritual performance is meant to "gain the grace of the god"; sincere intentions coupled with the performance of ritual injunctions is meant not merely to influence events but to call supernatural and divine intervention into worldly affairs. Without winning the favor of these supporting and directing powers even correct ritual performance would not suffice to bring about the desired results and personal, transformative spiritual knowledge would be impossible. In many cases adepts spoke not only of appealing to Devī or other demi-gods but of petitioning their gurus or other historical figures to intercede. The power of these historical figures is considered available usually as it emanates from their relics, teachings or the lasting residual effects of their

accomplishments.

Thus, in contemporary practice as in historical sources, Śrīvidyā considers spiritual and worldly aims inseparable and interrelated and devises a three sided theology to accommodate its theistic non-dualism. In its most concise form this theology accepts (1) supernormal powers such as mantras as directly intervening in worldly events; (2) the necessity of self-effort to effect personal change; and (3) the influence of divine powers, that is, the "grace" of a deity which is disposed at its own discretion and propitiated through devotion. Each of these elements contributes equally to the tradition's whole theological perspective.

(1) Because reality emanates from a single source of primordial sound it is natural to assume that certain keys, such as mantras within ritual structures governed by rules of initiation and so forth, can directly effect the course of events. Considered naively this approach seems magical, that is, a belief that events are governed and influenced by sounds and actions without visible or, strictly speaking, "scientific" relations. But contemporary adepts are convinced that this belief in ritual efficacy is entirely founded on a "scientific" basis; Śrīvidyā is a vidyā, a "science", they reply, not a mere belief in the supernatural. Its effects may go beyond the ordinary realms

of rational enquiry and depend upon revelation as a textual source and "special spiritual insight" to determine the results but, in the opinion of adepts, Śrīvidyā's science (vidyā) is no less empirical or verifiable than other kinds of "science".

In circles of contemporary adepts the result is a nearly endless discussion of the parallels between the science of mantras and Śākta cosmology and the discoveries of modern science. Since the majority of contemporary, high-caste adepts have been schooled in India's western (British) pattern of university education, most consider themselves familiar enough with the physics of the twentieth century to make comparisons. A substantial number have devoted themselves to a study of parallels between their own mantric and ritual traditions and contemporary science. Their conclusions are predictable: Śrīvidyā only confirms proven scientific facts and contributes to the discussion of the hypothetical.[19] If modern scientists, they maintain, only took these "ancient teachings" more seriously they might, in fact, come to the same conclusions; they could resolve their own scientific dilemmas through an appeal to the Śrīvidyā system. It was clear that to the faithful, Śrīvidyā had perfected long ago the substance of the Vedas and Tantras and that the conclusions of modern science would only confirm these revelations.; some adepts go so far as to

view it as a duty to make these parallels public and to "advance" the cause of science by revealing Śrīvidyā's explanations. As one enthusiastic adept related:

> Śrīvidyā's explanations are not merely materially oriented or mere explanations of the natural world. They have a higher purpose than western science because they provide for the spiritual welfare as well as explain reality.[20]

It should be noted that Śrīvidyā adepts are merely characteristic of a general movement in contemporary India dating from at least the nineteenth century in which the revelations of religious traditions are viewed as reflecting the conclusions of science.

It is clear, however, that this ritual dimension of Śrīvidyā's soteriology calls to mind the more ancient concepts of mantra efficacy preserved in Vedic tradition. It is, as it were, the Karmic aspect of a triadic soteriology, depending upon ritual action and belief in sound as paralleling the natural and social universe. To master these ritual actions and to have been instructed into the use of such mantric sounds is to be able to control events in both natural and social spheres.

(2) One also observes emphasis laid on the role of ritual and mantra in the process of personal transformation. An adept changes the world, at least in some measure, to the extent that he or she changes their view of the world; what effects change in the subject is considered a viable change

in the status of reality itself. In self-effort that seeks transformative knowledge through contemplation, study and other intellectually oriented pursuits (like the interpretation of ritual and mantra), and used by the Śrīvidyā adept to draw upon the rich traditions of Hindu darśana. From the interpretive stance of non-duality, conventional reality is seen as a direct reflection of the mind's self understanding. Adepts suggest that philosophical non-dualism's inherent contradictions (such as how can anything be said at all without the binding conditions of dualism) are resolved only in a direct contemplative experience. The truth of the position, as it were, does not depend upon sound reasoning alone and must, in the words of one adept, "go beyond the limits of reason once reason has come to a useful conclusion".21

Self effort and the contemplative investigation of reality reflect the Jñānic or knowledge aspect of Śrīvidyā's triadic soteriology. This knowledge is a completely personal experience though its effects may certainly influence others. The point, however, is that Śrīvidyā tradition incorporates jñāna yoga into its practice and gives equal emphasis to its role in the liberative process.

(3) Śrīvidyā, at all levels of practice and interpretation, is a deeply theistic faith bound up in traditions of Hindu devotionalism or bhakti. How God acts

in the world and even what is meant by "God" are matters of investigation. Divine action and even intervention is not only considered within the realm of possibilities but as a necessary component to liberation. But how is a view of a Creator acting upon its Creation compatible with the view that there is no ultimate distinction between the two? An adept offers this explanation:

> So long as we live in this world or are bound by the limits of a dualistic mind, then we see that there is a Consciousness in creation that is purposeful and greater than ourselves. This is God acting in the natural [and social] world when it is for the welfare of all; what is evil or cruel is the result of human ignorance or perception. The tiger is not cruel because its nature is to kill, this is its nature as God has given it...only humans are cruel when they are ignorant of their god-like nature. But from the standpoint of the yogi everything is clear. The yogi continues to speak of God knowing there is no difference between himself and God but does not act to upset the ordinary understanding of those not prepared for this realization or even to hear of it. Bhāskara[rāya] makes this point very clearly [cf., Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, Introduction], the seer should not disturb those with ordinary views. Is God different than us? Well, at one level, yes, so long as we are ignorant but from another, higher point of view there is no difference at all. As Being and Consciousness together, God acts in perfect knowledge which only realized beings (jīvanmuktas) are capable of fully understanding. Until then we must try to understand what they say and have faith that God wills what is good even when we do not understand. There is no conflict between [these positions] in my own spiritual understanding because everything is resolved when one no longer tries to make everything perfectly rational. So long as you stay at the intellectual level you will see a contradiction between all these things [i.e., mantras, self-effort in meditation and action and the role of grace].[22]

In each instance Śrīvidyā adepts appeal to their own experience to resolve logical contradictions in the theological presentation. It is fair to say that in certain instances it was only my raising the issue that prompted a response; adepts seemed quite puzzled why (or how considering my own initiation) one would see such paradoxes when, to them, none existed. They saw no purpose, as it were, in searching for a rational or logical solution to the "problem" because, to them, no problem existed that was not resolved in their own experiences. Any purely intellectual enquiry into these theological questions was flatly rejected as a waste of time or, at best, a naive and unenlightened perspective. When I proposed to several adepts, and specifically to "Nārada" and "Agastya", the triadic structure of Śrīvidyā's theology they would acknowledge patterns but saw no useful purpose in devising it. (When I explained that it was merely to explain the tradition they responded that a distinction should be made between these spiritually "fruitless" academic exercises and the practice of tradition. As intellectuals they did not protest to the enterprise per se as some others did.) They did not believe that the three perspectives entailed any "logical" contradiction despite seeming paradox because of the assurances of textual revelation (that is, their faith in scripture), their observation of adepts who had "realized

the truth" (that is, faith in their guru's and others' experiences) and their own personal experience confirming the tenets of faith.

"Ānanda" Mandali not only publishes a large collection of texts and commentaries but annually conducts a semi-private ritual event that may be one of the largest and most elaborate of its kind in contemporary south India. The ritual is officially designated a gurupūjāmahotsava, that is, a "great festive ritual for the teacher", but centers on the worship of 916 women considered embodiments of the goddess Tripurā. Each woman must be a suvāsinī, that is, married and in an auspicious condition (sumaṅgalī) (that is, her husband must be living, the family must not suffer from some occasional ritual pollution, etc.). The participants are chosen by subscription and much effort is made to raise the necessary funds. The merit obtained from a contribution is certainly a factor in fund raising but the Mandali remains somewhat selective in accepting monies and in permitting individuals to attend. "Nārada" explains the situation:

> Though personally and as a group we do not object to non-Brahmins becoming initiates into Śrīvidyā, for practical reasons only Brahmins can be invited and only Brahmin women worshipped as suvāsinīs. This is because some Brahmin people making contributions would raise objections and withdraw their support. Of course we think any suvāsinī can be worshipped as Devī but we cannot

> expect others to feel this way or to take food with non-Brahmins.[23]

He went on to say that this "of course" did not apply to me personally. It was obvious that it was not Śrīvidyā initiation that permitted me to attend but that as a westerner I could be considered "casteless" rather than strictly outcaste. Not all invitees or suvāsinīs were Śrīvidyā adepts, in fact, only a select few, including all the members of "Ānanda" Mandali and several from the "Gāyatrī" Mandali. The major criteria for participation were a willingness, a contribution and a Brahmin birth. A few known Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts refused to attend because of the exclusion based on caste but it was clear that the majority who did attend felt the caste exclusion to be an appropriate response. As one initiate noted:

> It is unfortunate that some have these caste feelings but it is more important that the function take place since its ritual effects will offset any ill effects. The ritual is intended to produce good and its organizers good intentions insure that this will be the result.[24]

"Ānanda" Mandali did not publicly advertise to obtain participants (since this would not have allowed them to make a caste distinction) but rather solicited within the smārta Brahmin community across Tamil Nāḍu. The affair was held in a spacious gathering hall usually reserved for marriages and other larger, auspicious functions.[25] After purifying the

entire space by a series of ritual offerings, invocations and mantras, "Nārada" explained to me that the whole building would be "made into a śrīcakra". In addition to the pūjā for the Mandali's guru (gurumaṇḍalapūjā) and śrīcakra pūjā to the nine sub-cakras (i.e., the navāvāraṇa pūjā), worship was also performed for the goddesses Śyāmā and Varāhī (the two other major deities described in PKS). These pūjās were conducted with the most senior woman of the Mandali ritually presiding. "Nārada", effectively responsible for the organization and fund raising but with no ritual role, remarked, "This is a ritual in praise of Devī conducted by Devī."

Indeed it seemed clear that the suvāsinīs in attendance were fully aware of a special ritual role while it was equally evident that only the women of the Mandali and a handful of others had any interest in the actual ritual performance being conducted at center stage. This was, for all concerned, as much a social occasion as a religious event and was conducted, as so many Hindu ritual functions are, in a festive and informal atmosphere.

Seats were designated on the floor where each suvāsinī would be worshipped with various offerings, and each place itself transformed into a different part of the śrīcakra. While there was no attempt to create the design of the śrīcakra, the cakra's sacred geography was clearly intended.

On a stage in the front of the hall the inner trikoṇa of the śrīcakra was however quite literally created. Sixteen women had been selected to represent the sixteen nityadevatās that preside over the sarvānandamāyā sub-cakra and in the center of this triangle, seated on the bindu, was the most senior female member of the "Ānanda" Mandali who had earlier conducted the various pūjās. Each of these sixteen women had been chosen, according to "Nārada", specifically "for their initiation into the mūlamantra", that is, each was considered a qualified Śrīvidyā adept. Younger women of the Mandali, initiated but not yet married, acted as the main supplicants distributing the ritual gifts and reading aloud the pūjā designed for the occasion (essentially an elaborated form of the suvāsinī pūjā described in the paddhatis). Despite the earlier elaborate pūjās, including śrīcakra pūjā, this portion of the day's events was clearly the climax, to be followed by a meal of ritual prasāda that had been offered symbolically to the "śrīcakra". Each suvāsinī was ornamented with sandlewood paste, presented with kumkum that had been offered in the arcana of the śrīcakra pūjā and plates of various yantras including the śrīcakra. Each also received a commemorative certificate while the inner sixteen were treated specially to a ritual painting of the feet and the gift of a new silk sari.

After changing into their new saris, and seating

themselves around the outline of the *trikoṇa*, the sixteen women were transformed into the presiding deities of the *śrīcakra*. It was at this point that the various offerings (*upācāra*) began (specified to be sixty-four and enumerated according to the scheme set forth in *PKS*, second *khaṇḍa*) and the ritual concluded with the dismissal of Śrīdevī's presence. Having concluded the formal ritual portion of the day's events (some seven hours of recitals and *pūjās* including separate groups of women chanting *SL*, *LSN* and *LTS*), the various forms of *prasāda* were distributed and following the meal, the event began to dissolve. To have departed earlier would have been considered inauspicious and every effort was made to keep the participants involved and within the boundaries of the "*śrīcakra*".

There was, of course, no ritual use of the *pañcamakāras* but rather the employment of designated substitutions, such as a mixture of milk and honey for wine. Ritual references to the five *makāras* were "concealed", as it were, in Sanskrit and recited in nearly unintelligible mantric formulas, the content of which considered far less important than their recital. The "Ānanda" Mandali organizers did not suggest that the affair was "Tantric" to any of those in attendance, presumably because they did not wish to risk a misunderstanding. What is not said, it seems, often spares unwanted or potential discord and "Nārada" intended only to

emphasis that the affair was a ritual of Śrīvidyā and not of "Tantra".

In this annually held event the "Ānanda" Mandali not only reaffirms its commitment to the memory of its foremost guru but creates lasting effects on the community and participants. Months afterwards Śrīvidyā adepts from other groups made mention of this affair and, generally speaking, praised the effort of the Mandali. Some, however, criticized the event and any effort to bring Śrīvidyā into the domain of, what they termed, "popular" religion. As an adept of another group remarked:

> Śrīvidyā can never become a popular religion, its practice is meant to effect the whole world but to be effective it must stay within the lineages of initiates. Such ritual affairs as this only dilute the power of its teachings.[26]

There was never any suggestion of the "Ānanda" Mandali's having broken restrictions on the secrecy of the tradition; even adepts with strong reservations about such "public performance" seemed to object on the grounds of its being a dilution of "pure" Śrīvidyā rather than an inappropriate revealing of traditional secrets. The adept cited above also noted, "They do not recite aloud any secret mantras such as the śrīvidyā and those they do will not do any harm." It would appear then that contemporary adepts consider only a very few elements of the ritual tradition to be strictly secret.

Considering the recent availability of written materials, it is only in the personal meditative encounter and in the exchange between disciple and guru that Śrīvidyā's secret interpretations and rituals are actually restricted to initiates. What is truly secret within Śrīvidyā tradition remains impervious to disclosure, namely, the private, first hand contemplative experience of its adepts.

It is the practice of the "Ānanda" Mandali, as it is with "Gāyatrī" Mandali, that both husbands and wives are initiated into Śrīvidyā. Women are strongly encouraged to participate, as indicated in the semi-private ritual function discussed above, but under ordinary circumstances the bulk of ritual responsibility is left to males and for married women, to their husbands. In one case in which a husband had no active interest in participating he was nonetheless initiated since, according to "Nārada", this was only appropriate. A woman could not be seen as having more spiritual "privilege" than her husband---perhaps a reflection of high-caste social norms. In another case, the father of a Mandali member initiated his eldest son, who displayed little interest in Śrīvidyā, so that it was "appropriate" to initiate his younger son; the elder son, in this case, could not be seen as having lost his family

seniority. Thus it is clear that while the "privilege" of initiation is restricted, criteria other than mere qualification at times affect the situation. In both cases family and social obligations are seen to have had a powerful influence on textual prescriptions and traditional ideals: what is, theoretically speaking, considered to be a purely spiritual qualification is actually governed by a host of other social and cultural factors.

"Ānanda" Mandali deals with ritual pollution in much the same way as the "Gāyatrī" Mandali; women during the first three days of their monthly periods continue to perform only the minimum ritual obligation (usually the repetition of the mantra twelve times) but are in all other ways abiding by the conventions of Brahmin society. "Ānanda" Mandali, however, does not stress as emphatically the spiritual equality of women but nonetheless seems to hold a similar position to that of "Gāyatrī" Mandali. Without making the claim that there interpretation returns to the "true Vedic life", "Ānanda" Mandali is content to believe its interpretation is in line with the traditions of the Tantras.

As in other Śrīvidyā groups, the Tantras or, more accurately, portions of the Tantric literature, are deemed as authoritative as any Vedic sources. "Nārada" expressed an opinion commonly found among south Indian Brahmin

Śrīvidyā adepts and one characteristic of Tantrics in general:

> The Tantras are like a fifth Veda. They are meant to complete the teachings of the Vedas and offer the best alternative in this present age. In Vedic times [i.e., the hoary past] the Vedic Dharma was most appropriate but now people can no longer keep those practices, and neither are they the most expedient way of gaining material and spiritual prosperity. The Tantras do not take the place of Vedic teachings, they are the Vedic teachings on certain matters, especially for our spiritual practice. For religious obligations such as marriage or rituals for our ancestors, the Vedic forms are still used. One must be instructed as to which sources best suit the situation.[27]

The same sentiments were echoed in interviews with members of nearly every lineage I encountered: Śrīvidyā is not considered strictly an alternative to Vedic Dharma, one that vitiates or removes from consideration Vedic teachings but as a natural continuation. While the majority express misgivings about the Tantras if read "unselectively", Śrīvidyā tradition, as each lineage defined its literature and practical interpretation, is never in conflict with Vedic Dharma because it addresses, as Vedic teachings do and in consonance with them, both spiritual and material needs.

Śrīvidyā's domination by high caste initiates in south India has nearly erased any conflict of interest theologically or practically between Vedic and Tantric teaching. Even in two lineages that theoretically accept elements such as the pañcamakāras (undoubtedly objectionable

to nearly all religious high caste persons) the tradition has been "sanitized" enough to bring its performance into an open arena for critical observation. Social pressures and conventions have placed natural boundaries on the tradition's notions of acceptable behavior and even non-high caste members of other groups appear to have adopted patterns of conduct associated with the upper castes, such as vegetarianism and teetotalism (practices certainly not enjoined specifically in the Tantras).

The situation in north India, however, at least in my own limited encounter with north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts, does not seem as rigidly conformist with respect to social conventions as in the south. While I did find Śrīvidyā adepts in the south theoretically condoning the pañcamakāras, for example, I could find none that would admit to practicing them. While several said they knew of others, including their own teacher (such as in the "Ānanda" Mandali), who had been qualified to employ the controversial elements, none would go so far as to accept openly and personally their literal use. In north India, in contrast, I found several initiates admitting openly to the use of the pañcamakāras, claiming that it was only by these Tantric elements that Śrīvidyā separates itself from "lower" forms of "less qualified" religious practice. These adepts did not fear social ostracism or the opprobrium of their peers

but rather considered themselves in a position of religious and social superiority.

In both regional situations the issue was interpreted as a matter of status, the use or rejection of the makāras in actual practice conferred, at least in the minds of the adepts, an elevated self esteem and a comparable social effect. To the southern adepts this status was achieved by conforming to the conventions of caste while in the few cases observed in the north it seemed to have been gained by deliberately rejecting the usual norms. Southern adepts sometimes expressed the idea that their interpretations of Śrīvidyā purged it of "impure elements" still in evidence in the north; they believe also that this "pure" form of practice (i.e., without the pañcamakāras) actually reflects the most ancient form of the tradition or as some put it, "Śrīvidyā without Tantric influences". As we shall see below, to others even the theoretical acceptance of controversial Tantric practices affects their self estimation and the opinions they have of adepts who permit these elements. But for the southern adepts condoning these practices at least at the theoretical level it seemed equally as important to stand firm on the issue. Their position socially was not jeopardized, in fact, so long as they did not let their ideas manifest literally, but the majority felt it was too strong a rejection of Tantric

tradition to reject these possibilities outright. It was "unfortunate", "Nārada" said, that "no one is now qualified for these things" but he strongly emphasized that the most "superior" form of Śrīvidyā's spiritual practice must include them. While fully aware that "others may not understand" the use of the pañcamakāras most adepts condoning them theoretically are willing to admit that they have bowed to social pressure. They emphasize that the levels of "higher qualification" that are required are simply no longer, or only, rarely achieved. In a way comparable to the notion that the Tantras fulfill Vedic teachings no longer practically viable because of the declining condition of society, these adepts maintain that the historical teachings of the Tantras harken back to a time when such fully qualified persons existed and practices such as the ritual use of the pañcamakāras could be considered acceptable and not liable to corruption. Those rejecting the pañcamakāras outright regard their inclusion in Śrīvidyā sources as a perversion of tradition and almost invariably consider any mention of them an unwarranted interpolation. These interpolated elements, in their view, have rather unfortunately taken root as a result of "Tantric influences" that can be weeded out only through a careful, selective rendering of text and tradition.

PROFILE 3: "Siddha" Mandali

The "Siddha" Mandali has not organized itself as formally as either of the two discussed above but does acknowledge a common lineage from a single guru. The group neither publishes nor organizes large semi-private events on the scale of "Ānanda" Mandali. Its adherents also form one of the most diverse groups in that each has received a very different form of the lineage's teaching and maintain only loose ties with other members of the lineage.

Unlike the other two Mandalis, "Siddha" Mandali has no living central figure or figures and splits internally on a number of interpretive issues. While claiming a direct lineage from Bhāskararāya, the group appears to differ from his interpretation in a number of important respects. They do not trace themselves through the line of Umānandanātha or through the lineage leading to Rāmeśvara but through yet another of Bhāskararāya's disciples (though they do not say which one). Their claim is, of course, impossible to substantiate but from every indication (including a number of interviews in Bhāskararājapuram and with other adepts) it is not impossible since Bhāskararāya was said to have left a least a dozen close disciples.

One key figure in the tradition has now formally taken sannyāsa though he remains living within his own extended family. His family has constructed a small retreat for him

and a shrine for the worship of Lalitā and the *śrīcakra* on the family premises. The "Swamiji", as adepts and family refer to him, is a grandfatherly figure who has gained some popular notoriety. After the death of his wife he followed in his own father's footsteps by entering the fourth *āśrama*. He remarked, "...while the Tantras do not require *sannyāsa* neither do they prohibit it." The lineage's guru, who is referred to only by the name of his village, did not, according to the "Swamiji", himself undertake formal renunciation but neither did he reject it. This position, the group maintains, was actually the view of Bhāskararāya though there appears no corroborating evidence in his works. In fact, it would seem that Bhāskararāya, if he did not reject *sannyāsa* , certainly did not make himself an example or encourage it for others. Other contemporary groups reject the idea that Bhāskararāya theoretically accepted *sannyāsa* .

The split in Śrīvidyā over even the theoretical acceptability of formal renunciation runs deep, as even these few examples demonstrate. No contemporary lineages appear to make *sannyāsa* a formal requirement, nor do any contend that it is necessary stage on the path to liberation. In the spirit of the Tantras, in fact, most do not encourage it even if they condone it as an acceptable practice. The "Swamiji" remarked that his lineage had

produced many sannyāsins but none that had not first passed through the householder stage. This passage through householdership (gṛhastya), he said, was a requirement for all Śrīvidyā adepts and, while he did not criticize the Śāṅkara tradition openly, he mentioned that Śrīvidyā tradition was, in this respect, markedly different than that of Śaṅkara.

"Swamiji" did, however, accept that Śaṅkara was the author of the Śākta and mantra texts attributed to him but that Śrīvidyā was only an aspect of the Śāṅkara tradition and that the Śāṅkarites do not devote their full attentions to the subject. Other members of the lineage express a deep reverence for the historical Śaṅkara and considered him a Śrīvidyā adept but do not in any way identify their tradition with his lineages. Given the popularity of eldest contemporary Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcipuram among south Indians (and especially smārta Brahmins) it is possible that this feeling of relationship on the part of "Siddha" Mandali is a recent situation. If the lineage does, in fact, trace itself to Bhāskararāya, it is unlikely that earlier members saw any connection between themselves and Śāṅkara tradition. This distance is still maintained on several interpretive issues such as the Śāṅkara tradition's acceptance of sannyāsa without first entering the householder stage.

"Swamiji", like all other members of the group, held a

complex view regarding caste and initiation. There are no non-Brahmin members of the group and no women initiates though they acknowledge the possibility of initiation for any person regardless of caste or gender. Śrīvidyā initiates who are non-Brahmins (or non-traivarṇikas) can be considered equal only in respect to the tradition's rites and spiritual practices but in every other respect must abide by conventional caste norms. Women must abide by the ritual conventions concerning pollution and are theoretically restricted from performing even the obligatory rites (nityakarmas) during their periods. In this Mandali only the ritual prasāda can be shared between initiates of different castes while all other forms of cooked food and water are treated according to caste restrictions. This too seems to run directly counter to Bhāskararāya's own views, though the "Swamiji" along with other adepts, maintained that this dual standard was also Bhāskararāya's true intention. In his own words:

> It is clear when we are Vaidikas and when we are Tantrikas. It is important not to confuse the two. Tantra is a special teaching that does not depend on caste while the Vedas specify exactly who is qualified for what teachings depending on birth. There is an ordinary world and a spiritual world and the two sets of teachings are formulated to meet each requirement.[28]

The "Siddha" Mandali, then, maintains that Śrīvidyā is perfectly egalitarian only in certain religious contexts but

that its standards of qualification do not apply in ordinary social situations. Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts of other lineages severely criticize this view as hypocritical though they themselves do not ignore or reject the significance of caste outright.

The place of women as initiates within the group is ambiguous. There were none, the "Swamiji" noted, because concepts of ritual pollution limit their daily required participation and because "their husbands completely fulfill the ritual obligation." This view in some measure discounts the merits of individual practice and takes a collective or family view of initiation privileges: what one member (i.e., the male head of the household) performs suffices and affects all the family members equally. But this too is subject to modification since "Swamiji" admitted that it is only the initiated adept that gains all the benefits (i.e., liberation) of the spiritual discipline (sādhana). He was insisting, in effect, that liberation remains a personal event and can be brought about only individually; non-initiates, including wives of initiates, would gain only a "partial" effects of proxy practice. In this case the theoretical acceptance of any person regardless of caste or gender distinction did not appear to have any actual parallel.

In direct contrast to Bhāskararāya's views the group

rejected the actual use of pañcamakāras but retained symbolic substitutes (pratinidhi). It was again a case of there no longer being any person qualified for the "higher teachings". Though aware of Bhāskararāya's insistence on the ritual use of the pañcamakāras, members of the group saw no contradiction in their interpretation. As a rule, where Tantric views seem to run afoul of standard Vedic traditions or caste conventions it is always the Vedic view or social norm that prevails. Thus even in ritual matters the "Siddha" Mandali does not, as others do, allow full participation for women or non-Brahmins though by calling themselves Kaulas they could not reject theoretically Tantric egalitarianism.

Another member of "Siddha" Mandali, "Purohita", is a domestic priest (purohita) by profession. Performing only those rites deemed ritually pure (and thus not involved in death rites but perhaps for inauspicious occasions, such as the ritual "removal" an astrological fault (doṣa)), "Purohita" brings his Śrīvidyā practice directly into his professional life. Acting as a consultant and sometime astrologer, he has developed a reputation for mantraśāstra that is, he says, known to be a direct result of being a Śrīvidyā worshipper. He initiates, for a fee, persons with specific needs (such as the desire for progeny or the dispelling of some evil) into a host of mantras but never

into the *śrīvidyā* unless they are deemed qualified to be members of the Mandali. This qualification for Śrīvidyā, he says, he alone does not determine but rather makes in consultation with other more senior lineage members. He openly tells his clients that he has obtained his abilities by the worship of Devī in the form of the *śrīcakra* but usually offers no further explanation. While non-initiates do not refer to him specifically as a "Śrīvidyā adept" they clearly take him at his word regarding the source of his powers. One person noted that he felt "Purohita" was no ordinary domestic priest because "he knows many secret mantras of Devī."

"Purohita" noted with pride that because his residence was within the old city of Madurai and very close to the Minaksi temple, he felt, as it were, close to the divine "power supply"; his living within the ancient sacred geography of the temple's *vastumaṇḍala*, he strongly contended, had a significant and salubrious effect on his spiritual and, consequently, on his professional abilities.

"Purohita's" extensive contact with non-initiates as a religious professional offers an example of Śrividyā brought into a more popular setting. One of the most noteworthy ways is by the initiation of non-initiates into the *prayogas* of the *Saundaryalaharī*. These ritual instructions treat each verse of the *SL* as a mantra and prescribe the drawing

of a pre-determined maṇḍala and the verse's recital a specified number of times for a certain period. For example, the prayoga for SL, verse 31 is prescribed in order to obtain royal or governmental favors, popularity or the fulfillment of any desire. The yantra of this verse happens to be the śrīcakra (specified only for this and verse 22) which should be inscribed on a plate of gold or five metal alloy; the verse is then to be recited 1008 times a day for forty-five days while facing east with the yantra held in the palm of the right hand spread over a piece of red silk. After this ritual recitation of the verse is completed, the prayoga further enjoins the recital of LSN and offerings of cooked rice, pāyasam (a sweet mixture of rice and milk), gram cakes, coconuts, grapes and bananas for the yantra.[29]

These elaborate injunctions, comparable for all fifty-one verses, "Purohita" notes, are usually too rigorous for even the most committed person, hence allowances and modifications are made in order to make the practice more accessible. He says that he himself has devised these changes based on his own judgement and as he has been "instructed". He further notes that only a few of the prayogas are prescribed because, "they suit all occasions and fulfill all such needs." "Purohita" has been giving instruction in the SL prayogas for a number of years though recently he has favored other less elaborate forms of

instruction such as mantra initiation of a "lower deity". These, he says, are more faithfully carried out and more desired since they do not require any skill, such as the ability to recite or read a complete Sanskrit text. As for the success of these efforts one can only say that "Purohita's" reputation has not suffered and his list of clients continues to grow. He says:

> I believe it is because Devī has blessed me and given me accomplishment (siddhi) in Śrīvidyā that I have been successful. Few people are actually qualified for the Śrīvidyā and all the obligations of sādhana but many can be helped or their spiritual progress aided by these lesser mantras and teachings.[30]

As a further result of this professional work, "Purohita" notes that many persons he has instructed or initiated now possess a Śrīcakra, keep it in their home and "regularly make some offering to it." He has, in effect, contributed to the increasing popularity of the image and at least to some extent influenced the understanding of non-initiates. Though he has not purposefully undertaken to draw Śrīvidyā into a popular setting there can be little doubt that he has used his own initiation and its suggestive powers to influence others and to work to his own personal advantage. While accepting this "professional role" as Śrīvidyā adept instructing non-initiates, "Purohita", like other adviser/astrologers, believes that his privileged membership into the fold entitles him to work for "the

benefit of others." The role itself seems to be an extension of the tradition's view of practice as being in the service of humankind and as having cosmic implications. Might not such instruction be turned towards evil or destructive motives? "Purohita" explained that all instruction is limited to specific ends and then monitored over a period of time, he "accepts the responsibility" of whatever he teaches to non-initiates but is certain that "Śakti will not permit" any misuse. Divine intervention again plays a pivotal role in maintaining the secret aspects of the tradition and as a guardian against its misuse or misinterpretation.

Regarding certain interpretations of Śrīvidyā ritual, "Siddha" Mandali is keen to emphasize its acceptance and following of Bhāskararāya. For example, though in seeming conflict on a number of other issues, the Mandali's adepts are adamant in their rejection of the *śrīcakra*'s image with the three outermost circles (the so-called *vṛttatraya*) surrounding the sixteen petalled lotus. Each of the six members of the Mandali with whom I had contact made it a point of showing me their personal *śrīcakra* in order to emphasize not only their adherence to Bhāskararāya's interpretation (*cf.*, *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya*, v.4) but to pronounce solemnly that this is indeed the only acceptable form of the *śrīcakra* for ritual purposes. One member was

aware of the division within Śrīvidyā on this issue and of the theory of three distinct *sampradāyas* or traditions (see Part One on the *śrīcakra*) interpreting presence or absence of the circles, but rejected the other views as lacking "textual authority". The mere oral tradition specifying the presence of the *vṛttatraya* with or without *pūjā* is rejected on the grounds that no established source, including Bhāskararāya, gives a *ritual* scope to this portion of the yantra. There is, in the minds of the "Siddha" Mandali, no other justifiable position. "Swamiji" observed:

> If the *vṛttatraya* were meant to be three outside circles [instead of three circles separating sub-cakras] there would definitely be a specified list of *devatās*. But none of the Tantras mention it and those who draw the *śrīcakra* with three [surrounding outside] circles simply misunderstand the instructions. The three circles are actually as Bhāskararāya says [that is, separating the sub-cakras].[31]

But as we have noted, "Siddha" Mandali is not as rigorous in its maintenance of Bhāskararāya's views on other issues. There can be little doubt that social and historical circumstances have effected serious changes in the lineage's interpretations. On controversial issues such as the use of the *pañcamakāras* they have become far more conformist than the deliberately defying Bhāskararāya. There is every reason to believe that, like their historical/spiritual mentor, they have not been immune to the sentiments and pressures of community and politics.

That Bhāskararāya could write about and apparently practice openly the full extent of Kaula ritual is as much a testimony to the values and pressures of his age as it is a reflection on the present social and political climate in south India.

1. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, November, 1984.

2. Madras, December, 1984.

3. Madras, January, 1985.

4. This account comes from a Śrīvidyā adept noted as a Tamil scholar and lacking any knowledge or formal training in Sanskrit. He belonged to no lineage and claimed his initiation to have come directly from the goddess. His understanding of Śrīvidyā was to contemplate mentally the anthropomorphic form of Tripurasundarī and to then mediate upon the śrīcakra by reciting the kādi pañcadaśī. He performed no other rituals nor had any particular interest in historical or theological sources.

5. This is only implicit in the Tantras by their affirmation of the "completeness" of the married state. I have not come across any direct refutation of renunciation though its unsuitability in Tantrism would appear to be a common element in the majority of oral traditions.

6. See Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.12.

7. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

8. I am told that a similar situation exists among the ascetical followers of Gorakhnāth. Though their physical appearance gives indication of their affiliation (that is, their slitting of the earlobes and hence the name kanphata yogis), to discover their lineage and specific affiliations one must ask a specific set of questions concerning the guru. This information was provided to me by David White who is presently preparing a study of the living Gorakhnāth traditions.

9. According to "Agastya": "The morning may be inconvenient and that is why many pūjās because of their length are conducted in the evening. But in the morning there is less interference spiritually. The mind is in a more lucid state because one has not spent the day troubling over worldly affairs or becoming annoyed by the difficulties of job or family. We encourage any member of the Mandali to set aside a specific time for pūjā, even if this is only a few minutes in the day. And, of course, the morning is preferable but not always possible. This develops discipline and the formation of good spiritual habits."

10. On the general practice of these elements of the pūjā see HT, p.141ff.

11. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

12. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

13. The general pattern of this ritual is outlined by Gupta in HT. The individual paddhatis of lineages specify the details and the actual mantric content of the ritual. It is in these very detailed remarks that the doctrinal positions and ritual practices of a lineage become increasingly apparent. One must be especially careful, however, since the presence of a theoretical point, such as the inclusion of the pañcamakāras does not necessarily mean actual, literal practice. By oral explanation and first hand observation, the paddhatis come alive and offer the most comprehensive understanding of a group's interpretive posture. These profiles intend to draw out the salient points of theology and the important distinctions between Mandalis.

14. "Nārada", Madras, January, 1985.

15. "Kārta", a member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

16. Madras, December, 1984.

17. Madras, January, 1985.

18. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, has developed a homa sacrifice on the model of those prescribed in Vedic traditions. For a brief description see HT, p.123f.

This particular event occurred in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia in 1976 under the direction of an adept of the "Guru" Mandali.

19. In one example an adept made a theological parallel to Einstein's classic equation, E=Mc2. The Energy component, the adept related, is nothing other than what we call Śakti while the Mass and Constant are Śiva. But both are equal, as the equation relates, and the two refer to a common reality which, he extrapolated, was only one in the final analysis. Such comparisons are frequently made by contemporary adepts who wish to bring their faith "up to date", as they say.

20. A member of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

21. A senior member of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

22. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

23. Madras, January, 1985.

24. Member of "Ānanda" Mandali, attending the ritual, Madras, January, 1985.

25. Since it was not the "marriage season" the proprietors were only too willing to oblige and even to offer a "concession" on the cost of the facility. Catering facilities (strictly Brahmin, of course) were supplied to provide the ritual naivedyam for the pūjā---the ritual purity of the cook food taken for granted by the organizers and participants.

26. A member of the "Siddha" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

27. A senior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, November, 1984.

28. In an interview conducted in Madras, December, 1984.

29. The prayogas are listed in various sources but most frequently as appendices to the printed editions of SL. The known editions that include the prayogas are listed in the Bibliography. A detailed study could be made of the whole practice of these prayogas since they are, in a way, a completely unique phenomena. No other text in Śrīvidyā, or in Indian literature, as far as I know, is used in a comparable way. Their history as well as their practice remains obscure but surely the key to unravelling their mystery lies in the living Śrīvidyā tradition which interprets SL and considers it a primary source.

30. Madurai, November, 1984.

31. Madras, December, 1984.

PROFILE 4: "Samaya" Mandali

The "Samaya" Mandali claims to follow the Samayācāra according to the interpretation of Lakṣmīdhara though they do not claim him (or the south Indian Upanisad commentator Rāmānanda about whom they had never heard) directly as part of their lineage. They are led by an elderly smārta Brahmin man, "Jyotiṣa", who has gained a reputation not only as the leader of this semi-private group but as an astrologer and religious adviser. The group takes its actual name, as does "Ānanda" Mandali, from the initiated name (dīkṣānāma) of its long deceased guru.

There are no non-Brahmin members of the Mandali and, according to "Jyotiṣa", this is appropriate for Samayācāra since it restricts membership to traivarṇikas "by definition". Based in Tamil Nāḍu, the group does not accept any other Brahmin castes in the immediate region as being twice-born (dvija). "Jyotiṣa" was not aware of Lakṣmīdhara's statement in which he says twice-born castes may follow only Samayācāra but that all castes are not restricted from following it. The "Samaya" Mandali interprets Lakṣmīdhara as limiting Samayācāra to twice-borns and maintains that only Samayācāra faithfully maintains the

"true interpretation" of Śrīvidyā. Lakṣmīdhara is continuously cited as the historical authority and "Samaya" Mandali strongly opposes the inclusion of Kaula elements such as the pañcamakāras. These "are not part of Śrīvidyā and are in texts influenced by Tantrics", according to "Jyotiṣa".[1]

It is clear that even the term Tantra is considered derogatory to the members of this lineage who speak with self assurance of "pure Śrīvidyā". The Mandali views a major part of its mission as disposing of the "Tantric influences" in Srīvidyā. They consider themselves entirely "Vedic" in practice and values and maintain that Srīvidyā is the secret teaching contained "within the Vedas" meant for only the few capable of understanding it. This opinion concerning the "original" and "secret" teaching of the Vedas is, of course, not uncommon but, unlike other groups, Samaya Mandali makes a very deliberate effort to distinguish "Veda" from "Tantra". The latter is totally unacceptable though "Jyotiṣa" admits that certain works such as the VT and JT are, for the most part, acceptable because they "do not openly express Tantric ideas like the pañcamakāras".

"Samaya" Mandali casts Śrīvidyā as a faith completely in consonance with conventional Brahmin values and practices and occasionally publishes volumes of essays asserting these positions. As a semi-private group their published work is

neither defensive nor apologetic but is unqualified in its affirmation of the Samayacāra interpretation as the only legitimate form of Śrīvidyā. Like other groups they raise funds for such efforts by subscription and publish what are popularly referred to as "souvenir volumes".[2]

The Mandali maintains, what it terms, "close personal ties" with the Śaṅkara maṭha of Kāñcipuram and identifies its own practice and tradition strongly with the Śaṅkara tradition. In each of its souvenir volumes the group has obtained the "official" sanction and blessings of the presiding Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcipuram maṭha. This traditional affiliation draws them into the heart of Śaiva-Śākta and smārta Brahmin orthodoxy, at least as it has been represented for at least the past fifty years. The Mandali views the historical Śaṅkara as a leading figure in the history of Śrīvidya and also reveres the works attributed to Gauḍapāda. "Jyotiṣa" claimed, as several other adepts belonging to other lineages (some even hostile to the Śaṅkara tradition), that the present Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcipuram maṭha regularly performs śrīcakra worship in private. Furthermore, he maintained, the maṭha does not make this public in any way other than by showing support for groups that involve themselves in Śrīvidyā tradition or by performing a few select public forms of worship.[3] Srīvidya rituals, according to "Samaya" Mandali, should

remain secret and private events in which participation and even observation should be strictly limited.[4]

Because of its rigid ideology the textual sources of the "Samaya" lineage are limited to works that betray no Kaula Tantric influences, such as the those attributed to Śaṅkara, Lakṣmīdhara and stotra works such as LSN and LTS. Unlike other groups that engage in a selective reading process to eliminate "offensive" remarks, "Samaya" Mandali completely rejects any texts bearing Kaula trademarks. The ritual handbook (paddhati) of the group, however, is not at unusual except in its omission of the pañcamakāras and kāmakalādhyāna. In other words, the paddhati agrees in most respects in form and content with that of any Kaula oriented group or with such classical references as the PKS, NS or SRK. In the case of the kāmakalādhyāna there are other Brahmin dominated groups who, while disapproving of the abuse of this practice has fostered, nevertheless do not reject it as a "pure, internal form of meditation."[5] The "Samaya" Mandali, however, takes a strong stand on the issue as a matter of principle. According to "Jyotiṣa", the practice is excluded from the paddhati because it has led to abuse (i.e., moral depravity) by "Tantrics".

> This is a Tantric practice that has seeped into Śrīvidyā because Tantrics took an interest in the tradition from a very early period and have had a corrupting influence on its practice.[6]

Perhaps the chief ritual characteristic of the group is its use of the so-called Samaya form of the śrīcakra which it has apparently adopted from Lakṣmīdhara. They are the only known group in south India actually following this particular ritual specification. This transposing of the cakra's configuration is intended as deliberate effort to distinguish Samayācāra from Kaulācāra, the common positioning considered the "Kaula form of the śrīcakra". (In the Samaya form (see Diagram B, Appendix 2) the śrīcakra is turned "upside down" from its common positioning such that the five major Śakti triangles are transformed into upward-facing Śiva triangles. The bindu is then repositioned in the space above the central triangle. See also Part One on the śrīcakra.) Unfortunately "Jyotisa" did not specify how this repositioning of the bindu affected the performance of śrīcakra pūjā and the relative positioning of the cakra's presiding deities. He simply replied that there are no major changes in this respect, despite the apparent disparities involved: the Mandali's paddhati confirmed that no alteration in the placement of deities is indicated.[7]

In other respects, however, the group seemed to have only a limited understanding of the content of Lakṣmīdhara's views and relied on its own oral traditions for interpretation. This has led to glaring discrepancies

between what Lakṣmīdhara interprets as Samayācāra and the practices of the Mandali: most evidently, the caste basis of membership which stands in conflict to Lakṣmīdhara's opinion.

Effectively, the Mandali limits membership to Brahmin males though women participate in their capacity as wives and daughters of initiates. "Jyotiṣa" does not theoretically oppose the initiation of women but maintains that the restrictions of ritual pollution (following the conventions of Tamil Brahmin society) make it "extremely difficult" for women to fulfill Śrīvidyā's ritual obligations. During the ordinary periods of ritual pollution, according to "Samaya" Mandali, women would not be able to perform even the minimal obligatory rites (nityakarma) such as the daily repetition of the mūlamantra. This eliminates the practical inclusion of women as initiates and full ritual participants.

"Jyotiṣa's" remark that Śrīvidyā is a "purely Vedic teaching" was meant to suggest a strict adherence to caste laws as they are popularly interpreted. Unlike other groups, families are not initiated as a whole nor male members as a matter of course. Rituals remain restricted to the home though on the occasion of past publications semi-private pūjās were held to celebrate the event and included the performance of Śrīvidyā forms of fire sacrifice (homa).

"Jyotiṣa" said that no future events were planned and that the work of the group remains essentially private. Expressing strong approval of the Śāṅkara *matha*'s ritual activities, he emphasized that their public Śrīvidya practices were limited almost exclusively to the administration of the Kāmàkṣī Temple of Kāñcipuram in which a *śrīcakra* before the image of the goddess is worshipped regularly. He did claim, however, that Śrīvidyà was the center of the Saṅkaràcàrya's personal devotions but that this fact is kept secret. In support of this he offered the example of the Sāṅkara *pīṭha*'s open encouragement of Srīvidya ritual performances and publications. While this is undoubtedly true, the *pīṭha* also supports a host of religious activities that have little to do with Śrīvidya and seems generally to encourage other *smārta* forms of worship.

"Jyotiṣa's" work as an astrologer and religious adviser involves the use of the *SL prayogas* in much the same way as it has already been observed. In other words, he took it upon himself to abbreviate and alter the textual prescriptions and to distribute, what he termed, "lesser mantras" as well. "Jyotiṣa" attributes his success as a religious adviser, though he is not a domestic priest by profession, to his being a Śrīvidyā adept. This admission of involvement appears to be the extent to which he is

willing to let non-initiates know of his personal practices. Among the semi-private groups I encountered the "Samaya" Mandali is one of the most restricted in access and limited in its outside contacts. It is nevertheless an important group because of its positions concerning caste and gender, as an interpretation of the Samayācāra and for its strong connections with the Śāṅkara tradition.

PROFILE 5: "Guru" Mandali

"Guru" Mandali is a private group and yet maintains a public form of institutionalized Śrīvidyā worship. Living members of the lineage do not trace themselves to a single figure though two elders are today its guiding forces. There are, therefore, at least two distinct lines of transmission flowing from the two most senior members but, what is termed, a "very close spiritual bond" between all. Though at present the group does not organize itself as a "*maṇḍali*" as formally as the others so far mentioned, it nonetheless acts as group in addition to individual, private activities. It has not yet published any works but plans to set up its own press "in order to preserve in print the important works of Śrīvidyā that are difficult to obtain."[8]

While at the level of individual practice there are purely private forms of worship maintained by adepts within

their homes, members of the tradition view these individual ritual efforts as a "service" to one another and to the whole world. Ritual efficacy can and does, according to "Guru" Mandali, have profound effects on worldly events. As "Naṭarāja", one of the two intellectual leaders, remarked:

> Everything a Śrīvidya adept does or says has an affect on the material and spiritual world, though this may not be obvious to outsiders. These affects are amplified in rituals. You will observe that at the end of each *srīcakra pūjā* we offer everything that is done for the welfare of the world and believe that it is only when the *upāsaka* renounces his own gain that even he can enjoy the benefits of *sādhana*. Srīvidyā is private and in many ways secret but it was never designed to be selfish. We are helping others, in our own way, to reach their goals. Rituals are only one way; a Śrīvidyā adept must be completely moral, a standard of excellence, the kind of person that one does not think as Hindu, Muslim or Christian but as a spiritual person.[9]

"Naṭarāja's" lofty ideals have not always been maintained in practice, he admits, by the other members of the group. But in his own limited actions this *smārta* Brahmin has sought to revolutionize the values of his caste community while maintaining throughout that he is "an orthodox Vaidika." As a Brahmin community leader he has openly advocated a reassessment of caste restrictions such as the sharing of food and water with non-Brahmins. These suggestions, he notes, have not always been greeted with enthusiasm.

The dual standard observed in the "Siddha" Mandali

above, for example, undergoes an important shift in the practice of "Guru" Mandali. While holding, for example, that only *traivarṇikas* are entitled to certain "purely Vedic" rites such as *upanayana* and the Vedic *gāyatrī*, these prescriptions do not limit Śrīvidyā to twice-borns. There are, effectively, two sets of rites and restrictions, each with its own qualifications and limitations. The "Vedic" prescription obtains for *traivarṇika* caste initiates only when it does not interfere with the principles of Śrīvidya as the Mandali interprets them. Thus when a Śrīvidya adept is present he is treated as both a religious *and* social equal by Brahmin members of the Mandali; non-Brahmins are also members of group and non-twice-born non-initiates are sometimes invited to witness or participate in Srīvidya rituals.

All Mandali members observe customs that reflect a direct influence of the Brahmin-dominated lineage but Brahmin members consider any effort to exclude full initiates from such things as sharing food or water to be an unwarranted violation of Śrīvidyā's liberal tradition. "Naṭarāja" explains the group's interpretations of caste:

> Śrīvidyā does not use caste as a basis for excluding anyone from participating or even witnessing its rituals. Every sincere person with respect for the tradition can be allowed at least to observe. Initiation is highly selective but we do not base this on caste. It is more important that a person have the qualities that we hold to be ideal. Of course, not all our close friends

> [i.e., initiates of the larger group] are as ideal as we would like and some are very proud of their being very orthodox Brahmins but do hold certain common caste feelings. This is wrong but I think it is natural. As Brahmins we were raised to act and respond in certain ways to people who are not like ourselves. We respect our elders and their ways. But in other ways we say that Śrīvidyā is in perfect accord with the Vedas. Caste has nothing to do with true religious and spiritual attainments, and it cannot be interpreted that way even in the Vedas. Rituals and duties restricted to twice-borns are not privileges but obligations that they must do. I think that Brahmins must do all such rituals not because they are more pure or higher persons but because they are the most impure. Our lineage believes that Śrīvidyā is pure, it is the *śuddhavidyā*, as Bhāskararāya says. [cf., *LSN*] We are pure vegetarians, and not only the Brahmin members. We follow in our ordinary lives the Vedic ways but feel that everyone who is pure in heart is entitled to be treated fairly. Not everyone is equal because no person is the same as another. It is our belief that everyone must do what they were born to do but this does not restrict a person based on caste. Not everyone can be a Śrīvidyā initiate, more than sincerity is necessary, but this is all decided individually. A Śrīvidyā adept must not be too emotional a person, for example, because this interferes with clear thinking and gaining spiritual insight.[10]

"Naṭarāja" speaks forcefully concerning Śrīvidyā's egalitarianism and his lineage's interpretations but has not discounted or rejected the values of caste. Still responding directly to the conventions of his community, he resists certain elements he deems oppressive but would, on the other hand, never think of violating most established customs. For example, in matters with broad social implications such as marriage, "Naṭarāja", like the other members of his lineage, expresses a deeply conservative

feeling, a reflection of the Brahmin community's values in which he is an active participant. No Brahmin Mandali member would consider marriage out of caste as acceptable, even to another non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā initiate; feelings about non-Brahmin members in this respect are more ambiguous but it is clear that no one would act either in violation of the instructions of their guru or with the stated disapproval of the lineage's members. The group functions, as it were, like a family in which discord is not uncommon while roles are clearly defined and, for the most part, accepted.

The extent of these role-conforming interpretations is reflected in attitudes towards the initiation of women. While theoretically there is no objection to women initiates, the group does not have any nor contemplates their direct ritual involvement. "Naṭarāja" explains:

> Women must observe the periods of pollution and while this does not mean they cannot become initiates it does restrict their movements and activities during these times. If, for example, a women is menstruating at the time of the full moon, she cannot perform the *śrīcakra pūjā*. Obviously men do not have this difficulty. This is why the women in our lineage leave the ritual activity [including the repetition of the mantra] to their husbands or to other male members of the household. The women gain the full benefit of the ritual and actions of the males without having to do all the rituals and meet all the obligations. If any one of them wanted to become initiates into the mantra they would have to observe certain conditions and meet the requirements set for all aspirants, but so far none have expressed this wish and I believe they will be content to let the

men act on their behalf.[11]

The women of this group do, in fact, participate in the private Śrīvidyā rituals conducted in their homes but not as full initiates. Sometimes singing songs or reciting *LSN*, the women with whom I had contact said that their role was to cook the food for *naivedya* and to offer devotions rather than conduct formal *pūjā*s; they elicited no interest in having a primary role in the rituals such as *śrīcakra puja*. Gender roles, whether they be willfully accepted or imposed by societal pressures and caste expectations, are considered within this Mandali a cornerstone to the stability of family structure. This feeling obviously carries into the interpretation of Śrīvidya. The young women in the families of the group's senior initiates took no interest in the complex ritual aspects of the tradition, aspects that they identified openly as male responsibilities. Some expressed deep dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their gender roles (as one woman said about being secluded during the first three days of the menstrual cycle) but they continued to follow these conventions without open opposition. The degree to which the women of the Mandali feel oppressed by their condition is left almost entirely private. But none felt that their family's involvement in Śrīvidyā limited or contributed to a feeling of being subordinate to men. As "Naṭarāja"'s wife said:

> I have no interest in Śrīvidyā's rituals other than to participate by singing or reciting *Lalitāsahasranāma*. I have my duties such as preparing the food for *naivedya* and in the early morning I do a little meditation the way my husband has taught me. I feel that this is enough. Śrīvidyā teaches us all as Brahmins that we are not special just because we are Brahmins. Any good person is worth a hundred of the kind of Brahmins we find today.[12]

The Brahmin members of "Guru" Mandali are in many respects more liberal than others in their social community, a condition they attribute to being Śrīvidyā adepts. Members express some reluctance to use the term "Tantra" because of its colloquial connotations but attitudes towards particular texts are governed more by content than ideology. The Mandali reads selectively and accepts those portions of works that meet its standards. Offensive concepts (i.e., strict Kaula concepts such as the *pañcamakāras*, etc.) or views inconsistent with their own views are censured and "appropriate" portions retained. "Guru" Mandali "sanitizes" the Kaula Tantras to meet its ideological standards but as "Naṭarāja" put it, "...even a work such as *Kulārṇava Tantra* which has many offensive elements, such as the *pañcamakāras*, contains many beautiful and useful verses."[13] Like the "Siddha" Mandali, "Guru" Mandali believes many of the passages or ideas deemed offensive are interpolations into scripture or are simply the work of "Tantrics" who confused and disrupted Śrīvidyā's "pure" development.

Mandali members grapple with the acceptability of ritual substitutes for the *pañcamakāras* but none would ever contemplate literal use. On one occasion a member of the group presented another with a silver spoon in the shape of a fish, intended as a symbolic substitute for the ritual ingestion of fish (i.e., the *matsyamakāra*). The object sits idly and may never be used because as the adept explained, "...I accepted it because I did not wish to offend my friend but I will not use it because I cannot condone even the suggestion of the *pañcamakāras* in my ritual actions."14 "Naṭarāja" further explained his own attitude towards the *pañcamakāras*:

> We cannot accept the use of *pañcamakāras* and do not believe that this is the higher way. If you read carefully in the Tantras you find that *pañcamakāras* are prescribed to induce a certain kind of effect that is then supposed to linger on afterwards. It is the feeling of bliss (*ānanda*) that is supposed to be the aim and things such as wine or illicit sex are meant to simulate this eternal, unchanging bliss. But we believe that these feelings can be achieved without *pañcamakāras*. What is the use of them if they are not necessary for what it is they are prescribed for? If you can achieve the result without them then that is the goal; then you will not have to spend any effort to renounce them when you do have the blissful experience. Such things will only be abused and even a great yogi should not perform these rites. What kind of example is he for others even if he does it in private? We do not reject the Tantras but we do reject many of the Tantric elements that have no place in a "pure" *vidyā* such as Śrīvidyā.15

Like other groups, the adepts of "Guru" Mandali perform the occasional rites of Śrīvidyā, such as the full *srīcakra pūjà*, at least once a month, invariably on the full moon day. One adept explained the pattern of his worship:

> I do the *śrīcakra pūjā* on the prescribed days, the full moon and the first day of the [Tamil] month. Other than that I do the full *pūja* only when it is convenient and I can devote myself completely to it. Each day I do a shortened version of the *pūjà* that takes only about thirty minutes. Most of this time is devoted to silent repetition of the *mùlamantra*.[16]

The actual amount of ritual performance in each adept's spiritual discipline is left in large measure to individual discretion and sometimes is specifically directed by a lineage guru. At the very least adepts perform a morning period of meditation and a brief ritual devotion. The most common practice is the recitation of the so-called *khaḍgamàlà* or "garland of the sword". This short litany lists the presiding deities of the *śrīcakra* following the dissolution method (*samhārakrama*) and is intended to abbreviate the full *śrīcakra pūjā* in both form and content. As one adept put it:

> The *khaḍgamālā* is an internal sacrifice (*antaryāga*) that can substitute for an external *śrīcakra pūjā*. It is a convenient summary of the longer *pūjā* but can have equal effect if performed with the proper contemplative awareness (*bhāvanā*).[17]

Following the *khaḍgamālā* a brief ritual purification

(i.e., *bhutasuddhi*) is performed and afterwards the silent repetition (*japa*) of the *śrīvidyā*. This pattern of practice (with some variation in length and content such as the inclusion of other mantras or a brief *nyāsa*) is common to the majority of Śrīvidyā lineages and cuts across ideological lines.

The *khaḍghamāla*'s origins remain obscure and its practice is without early textual and historical references. Its popularity is undoubtedly a result of its being an evocative yet concise rehearsal of the basic components of the longer *pūjā*. It appeals especially to those lineages in which ritual is subordinated to meditative practice. While all adepts seem to place a greater theoretical emphasis on internalization of the ritual (*antaryāga*), and thus on strict meditation, rather than on the external form of the ritual itself (*bahiryāga*), in practice there is an observable split between different groups and individuals. Some place a greater emphasis on expanding ritual in order to prolong meditation and the activity of ritual involvement itself (such as the "Gāyatrī" Mandali; others reduce the amount of formal ritual practice in order to concentrate purely on contemplation (*bhāvaṇā*). Certain members of "Guru" Mandali, for example, deliberately reduce the amount of ritual activity in the private setting in order to maximize the amount of time spent in silent meditation.

Other "Guru" Mandali members, in a way similar to the adepts of the "Gayatrī" and other Mandalis, elongate both ritual and meditative exercises.

It is not surprising that the "Guru" Mandali has adopted the khaḍgamālā as their most common form of daily worship; it provides enough suggestive material to bring to mind the entire navāvāraṇa śrīcakra pūjā and yet eliminates external ritual elements such as vessels (pātra) and offerings (upācāra). As "Naṭarāja" notes, the entire ritual process is made a mental act; this is the true intent, he asserts, of internal sacrifice (antaryāga). He continues:

> Our aim is to use the ritual for its maximum benefit and then to eliminate it gradually. But we do not suggest that the ritual ever be entirely disposed of as some of the Samayācārins say [cf., Lakṣmīdhara]. This would not be recommended for two reasons: first, it would set a bad example for those who are still very much in need of the ritual discipline. The ritual is designed to guide the aspirant along the spiritual path: it is very deliberate in its method. An adept who believes that he personally no longer needs the ritual does a disservice to the tradition by confusing lesser aspirants who may come to know that he has abandoned the ritual. This leads to the second point: even the most accomplished Śrīvidyā adept is always in danger of losing his grip on the enormous power he has learned. By giving up the ritual one loses the strict personal discipline that was the major reason for the accomplishment in the first place. One can easy fall prey to laziness or even cause oneself severe injury by thinking that the ritual no longer is necessary. The spiritual ladder is very easy to climb, any Śrīvidyā initiate should be able to make fast progress provided he is well-instructed, but this ladder is also very unsteady unless there is a very strict discipline. This means that the ritual aspect should never be entirely abandoned,

> as the Samayācarins say, but that it should not be unnecessarily prolonged as some would like it. This makes it only ritual and not [real] meditation.[18]

Other Mandali members and lineages, such as "Gāyatrī" Mandali who set aside more time for formal ritual performances on a daily basis, do not frequently practice the *khaḍgamālā* and strongly disagree with "Naṭaraja's" assessment. To them the formal *śrīcakra pujā* is the centerpiece of the spiritual discipline and its expansion by song, ritual elaboration (such as increasing the number of vessels, i.e., the *pātrasādhana*) and meditative periods is the ideal form of generating a more concentrated spiritual discipline. By increasing the external forms of worship (*bahiryāga*), these adepts believe, they naturally increase the amount of internalization (*antaryāga*) and mediation (*bhāvanā*). As an exponent of the ritualist orientation remarked:

> I daily perform the [*śrīcakra*] *pūjā* in a most elaborate form, beginning at three-thirty in the morning and continuing to nine or ten [in the morning]. My wife will spend the whole time preparing the *upacāras* and the *naivedya* [as offerings]. Nothing can disturb me during this time, and when it is over I feel as if it [i.e., the *pūjā*] is with me the rest of the day. The goddess is present in every thing that is said or done and the *pūjā* becomes the centerpiece of our family's life.[19]

When I later questioned this adept about his deep emotional expressions during the pūjā---he actually wept during the invocation of the goddess on the śrīcakra---he responded:

> I am overwhelmed with the beauty and the power of the pūjā and with the grace of Devī. I feel so involved with these events that it is no longer a [mere] ritual [action] but a direct experience of the Divine.

These emotional outbursts were privately criticized by other Mandali members who view them as inappropriate to the tradition's philosophical and practical ideals. One adept remarked:

> Though we do not doubt his sincerity we believe these [outbursts] are not proper to a disciplined sādhana. It is an indication that the adept has far to go before he will realize his blissful identity with the Absolute. This kind of emotion is appropriate for an ordinary bhākta but not for a person of knowledge (jñānī).[20]

In "Guru" Mandali the majority of initiates receive only limited ritual instruction which is gradually increased if deemed appropriate to the individual or, as "Naṭarāja" remarked, to "insure that the knowledge of the tradition continues." Some adepts, it would appear, are instructed in elaborate ritual forms not for the sake of personal practice but rather to insure the ritual's preservation.

In the majority of other Śrīvidyā lineages, however, ritual performances become increasingly elaborate as

initiates gain greater expertise at both theological and practical levels. Consequently, one finds less senior members of the "Guru" Mandali performing more ritual than their *bona fide* teachers whereas just the opposite is the case in the majority of other lineages. Ritual and mantric expertise has led the majority of south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts with whom I had contact to believe, despite professions by both Kaulas and Samayins of the superiority of "purely internal worship", to more and more elaborate forms of external ritual performance.

There are at least three senior members of the "Guru" Mandali, all Brahmins, who act as gurus---a privilege tacitly bestowed on them by virtue of their seniority and experience. Initiation is formal but does not even remotely approximate the elaborate descriptions given in classic sources such as *PKS* or *VT*. The ritual prescriptions of "classic" initiation, such as it is described by Jan Hoens in *Hindu Tantrism*, appear to have no parallel among modern adepts and lineages.

In one case of initiation into the *śrīvidyā*, the senior adept after a period of several months of daily instruction chose an auspicious day (astrologically determined) and brought the aspirant before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti (that is, Śiva as Guru) in the Mīṇākṣī temple of Madurai. After a

brief period of meditation preceded by a ritual purification (*bhūtaśuddhi*), the guru simply whispered the *śrīvidyā* mantra into the ear of the new initiate. In the weeks that followed the new initiate was given a two-dimensional *bhūprastāra śrīcakra* engraved on a plate of five metals along with instruction in the performance of the *pūjā* following the Mandali's *paddhati*. A senior member of the group explained the initiation and several other interpretive issues within the lineage:

> We no longer follow the elaborate specifications of the Tantras and other sources. We have abbreviated the ritual but retain all the essential points. Instead we give a long period of instruction. During this time we discuss the meaning of the three aspects of the goddess; her image, her mantra and the *śrīcakra*. We teach mainly through the *Lalitāsahasranāma* and then from our own *paddnatī*. This gives us all the textual sources necessary at this level. Before proceeding further with the giving of the mantra I ask the permission of my own teacher [who is actually no longer living]. Then to honor my teacher and to show the importance of the guru's words and power, we come here [before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti] in order to be in the presence of the Śrīguru. But before we teach the *mūlamantra* many aspects of its meaning are discussed and its relationship to other mantras and *devatās*. For example, we must first give initiation into the *mūlamantra* of Gaṇapati, because without this no further progress can be made. So this too must be explained. Only then do we give the *śrīvidyā*. In our lineage there is only *kādi pañcadaśākṣarī*. We are aware of the *sodaśī* and some of us have initiation into this [in the *mahāsodaśī* form] but we do not teach this for two reasons. The first is that we do not believe that this is the original form of the *śrīvidyā*, how could it be when there is so much difficulty with its form? It is not actually sixteen syllables. [See Part One on the *śrīvidyā*] And there is also the *laghu*

> [i.e., the abbreviated or "light"] form. But also it is usually considered only to be a mantra purely for liberation and without both the material and spiritual dimensions of the *pañcadaśī*. This is why it is usually reserved for *sannyasins* according to our tradition, but even this is not encouraged. Why should a man have to renounce the world to become unattached? The saffron robe is always worn over the heart, none of the *sādhus* you see know the true meaning of non-attachment. But the mantra in the *pañcadaśī* *kādi* form meets all the ritual requirements and fits perfectly into the patterns of the *pūjā*. Have you ever seen a *paddhati* for *hādividyā*? I have not but if you know the *pūjā* and the form of the *hādividyā* you would see immediately that its number of syllables will cause some modification in the ritual---the number of triangles and other details will not match perfectly. Therefore it is our belief that *kādi* is the original mantra and that it is the *most* powerful. We give the initiation in this way so that it will best suit the needs of both teacher and student. A long ritual is not practical, and whom does it benefit?[21]

The interpretation giving preference to the *kādi* *pañcadaśī* *śrīvidyā*, one should note is made purely on theological rather than historical grounds. It is the apparent desire for theoretical and ritual consistency that has shaped this lineage's interpretations. Occasionally aspirants within the "Guru" Mandali are given the so-called Bālā mantra (i.e., the *mūlamantra* of Bālātripurasundarī) as the final stage in initiation but more commonly the *śrīvidyā* is given as the culmination of several months of minor initiations into "lesser" mantras (which may or may not include initiation into Bālā but always includes the *mūlamantra* of Gaṇapati).

The three senior teachers of the group all expressed a similar notion, namely, that the full extent of each aspirant's qualification (*adhikāra*) was known from the very beginning of the process of instruction. Teachings are augmented and expanded, as is ritual, but rarely it seems do students obtain precisely what they themselves consider their due unless the guru consents. For example, one adept initiated into the *śrīvidyā* but lacking detailed instruction in the *śrīcakra* ritual expressed his own disappointment but was resolved to "what ever the guru thinks is best for me. I would like to learn a more elaborate form of the *pūjā* but it is the short form that I do now which my guru has decided suits me."22

As in other lineages, it is the mantra initiation which specifically entitles the aspirant to some form of ritual worship but not necessarily the full form of *śrīcakra* *pūjā*. In some cases the level of instruction does not proceed any further than mantra initiation and an abbreviated form of ritual in which contemplative worship is performed. While in theory all Śrīvidyā adepts perform some kind of *śrīcakra* worship, in practice this worship is more restricted. According to "Naṭarāja" it is a matter of qualification (*adhikāra*):

> Some persons are neither suited for the ritual or actually qualified to have the *śrīcakra* as part of their worship. We believe that when Devī is temporarily invoked onto the cakra it is

> instilled with her power. This is then taken back into the adept's body at the conclusion of the *pūjā*. These are very familiar parts of the ritual that can be found in any *paddhati*. But the truth is that even after this has taken place [or, for that matter, before] the *śrīcakra* is not an ordinary object. We do not encourage anyone to possess it, especially if it is in its metal form. You will notice also that few of us [i.e., with the lineage] keep the [three-dimensional] *meru* form [of the *śrīcakra*]. This is usually reserved for temples or at least is not ordinarily used in the temporary invocation of Śakti---it requires more ritual attention and should have the permanent presence invoked. But some *upāsakas* should not keep a *śrīcakra* even if they do regular worship (*upāsana*) on the mantra. They may think of the *śrīcakra* while doing their meditation but may not be considered qualified for its actual worship (*pūjā*). This is determined solely by the guru and is for the good of the student. Later on someone may be given the *śrīcakra* but only rarely does one receive the cakra and the mantra at the same time. Usually there is some time between the two initiations though, for us, there is no more strict formality for giving a *śrīcakra* to a student who already possesses the mantra. We choose an auspicious day [astrologically] and present it at the time of *pūjā*, but there is no further ritual initiation.[23]

Other lineages, while maintaining the general pattern in initiation of 'mantra first, cakra later', invariably present a *śrīcakra* to initiates whether or not they are instructed in an elaborate form of ritual worship. There is certainly an implied hierarchy in this initiation process determined largely by seniority and tenure but not necessarily linked to a more thorough knowledge of external ritual. "Guru" Mandali offers an important exception to what would otherwise appear as a hierarchy within lineages

based upon ritual expertise. As we have noted, several senior members of "Guru" Mandali actually perform less ritual than their students.

But one cannot undervalue the increasing historical importance of ritual expertise and its role within most lineages as an indication of spiritual advancement. Bhāskararāya, esteemed primarily for his interpretive abilities regarding the mantra and cakra, is no less revered as a master of the ritual process. Contemporary lineages by and large accept ritual sophistication as an implicit indication of spiritual power; however, if another group or individual appears to emphasize ritual over contemplative activities they are likely to be criticized as lacking sufficient focus on antaryāga. These attitudes are comparable to those expressed concerning the study of traditional texts and concepts: adepts are quick to protect their close colleagues by emphasizing the "practical" dimensions of studies but are skeptical of others who may be straying into "fruitless" intellectual speculation. These perspectives, in one way, reflect the deeply private orientation of lineages---opinions concerning other adepts are sometimes founded only on hearsay or appearances simply because tradition does not encourage activity as a "community" of faith.

In comparison, however, Śrīvidyā displays far more interest in publicly accessible activities than perhaps any other Śākta Tantric sect. It seems ironic that contemporary adepts disclaiming interest in matters other than those within their own lineage are nonetheless often willing to bring the lineage into public view. They are certainly not immune to public perception and remain especially sensitive to caste community responses.

The Tantric emphasis on "privacy" does not mean that individuals and even semi-private groups suspend judgments regarding either their own "correct" interpretations of the tradition or the "misinterpretations" of others. The sense of "community" outside the parameters of the lineage is extremely limited and individual adepts or lineages rarely seek "outside" contacts. This appears to reflect a broader situation among Hindus, not merely Tantrics: Saiva Hindu worship, even in public forums such as temples, emphasizes individual encounter and participation within the local (caste) community rather than as a community acting as a self conscious unit. Śrīvidyā liturgies, however they may have an impact on others, are designed specially for the spiritual needs of the individual adept. Though _paddhatis_ may serve as the liturgy of a group, they are not intended to be group liturgies.

Within Tantrism the emphasis on individual effort in spiritual discipline contributes to the tightly knit structure of lineages and the apparent lack of a larger "community" feeling. This has not eliminated a sense of "tradition", inasmuch as this entails continuity with the past, though individual adepts may not feel an obligation to justify the views of historical figures, texts or practices. While gurus and deities may be propitiated to intercede for the welfare of an individual, a specific group or even the whole universe, material prosperity and liberation are individually achieved by an adept's personal efforts.

Privacy remains an important feature within Śrīvidyā despite the appearance of semi-private organizations and the impact of the tradition and adepts on popular Hindu faith: the vast majority of adepts belong to lineages with no public activities and maintain strict privacy in practice. As one adept of the "Guru" Mandali said:

> Another Śrīvidyā adept could be living across the street and you would not know unless you asked. There is a reluctance, I think, not only because it is personal but because there is so great a possibility of being misunderstood. There is simply no reason to advertize the tradition because those who are meant to learn it will eventually come to it, if not in this life then in some other.[24]

The feelings of predetermined destiny alluded to in this quotation also emerge in other contexts, such as the

feeling of being part of a privileged, spiritual elite. In this way Śrīvidyā is representative of a prevailing attitude within Tantrism. Accompanying the values of secrecy and empowerment through selective initiation is the feeling that admission to Śrīvidyā specifically indicates that the individual has reached the highest rung on the karmic ladder. (A position, one might add, that is not uncommon to many Hindu sects.) While birth in a particular caste (in some lineages) may not be the determining criterion for admission, adepts often convey the impression that they feel "born" for this faith. Adepts frequently cite Śrīvidyā sources to maintain that initiation into the mantra and secrets of the sect indicates an individual has reached the last birth in the karmic cycle.[25]

Scriptural sources, however, are not the only authority for this statement since adepts consider their teachers to be "perfectly realized" and hence no longer subject to transmigration (saṃsāra). This belief would, at one level, appear to undermine the strong emphasis given to individual effort as a necessary element for the successful culmination of the spiritual discipline. If the assurance of liberation comes at the point of initiation then why would a rigorous life of disciplined practice be necessary? While this assurance of prosperity and final liberation is taken seriously among contemporary adepts, in practice it has led

to differing interpretations. For some this ultimate guarantee that the spiritual discipline will confer its benefits (provided one lives up to the rigors of sādhana) only confirms feelings of superiority. There is no dearth of pride, however undeserved it may actually be, among a substantial number of adepts. For others there remains a powerful theological check: until that realization is fulfilled, God, as a real and discriminating superior Consciousness, plays a prominent role in determining the outcome of an adept's discipline. Viewed in another way, the necessity of continued discipline is part of the initiation process itself. Adepts are usually not so arrogant as to believe that the formal beginning of spiritual discipline, initiation, is also its culmination.

The value of humility, however often reiterated and seemingly lacking among some contemporary adepts, nevertheless has an important function in the way adepts think about themselves and others. It is, for example, quite acceptable to belief that another has attained the goal of liberation while yet living (jīvanmukti) but it would be considered extremely inappropriate to make this claim for oneself. As one adept put it in a familiar turn of the phrase, "those who say [they are liberated] do not know [i.e., have obtained liberating knowledge (jñāna)] and those who know do not say."

Disciples always maintain that their own gurus have reached the liberative goal even if appearances do not seem to confirm the impression. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, makes "guarantees" of spiritual and material prosperity that don't always reflect actual circumstances. One adept, for example, spoke with obvious passion about how his own teacher had not only died in poverty but from cancer.[26] These factors, however, in no way lessened his conviction in the guru's achievement or in the efficacy of the tradition's claims to prosperity. The guru's fate was "karma" and provided a painful but purposeful example, the adept said, since the guru had died "without showing any indication of suffering."

The tradition's claims of spiritual achievement and material prosperity have not it seems eliminated the very real suffering of adepts, a situation, we can be certain, not without historical precedents. But it is no less obvious that Śrīvidyā has provided spiritual comfort for its faithful adherents. Though it is a karmic destiny to have been blessed to receive a teaching that guarantees liberation in this birth, it may be the result of other karmic outflows that determine other less salutary effects. There is a fine line, it would seem, between the claims the tradition makes concerning mastery over the human situation and the degree to which the adept feels bound in the karmic

cycles of existence.

Some members of the "Guru" Mandali also serve as the traditional, hereditary temple priests at two prominent Śiva temples in central Śrī Laṅka. These Tamil families control the institutions as a private trust and maintain all the customs of Tamil smārta Brahmins. Only immediate members of the extended patrilineal family are entitled to be priests but it is clear that the lineage views the activities of the temples as almost an extension of their individual discipline and lineage activities. Rites and activities are nearly identical at both sites and thus can be discussed as a single example.

Śrīvidyā worship is a common feature of the temples' activities though these are not the exclusive forms of worship. Before the image of the goddess within the inner sanctum is placed a three-dimensional meru form of the śrīcakra in which the presence of the deity is permanently invoked. Though Śiva is technically the focus of temple rites, it is Śakti who receives the lion's share of attention both from priests and devotees. A complete śrīcakra pūjā is performed daily though access to the sanctum is restricted to the hereditary priests. As a matter of course all male members of the priestly families

are initiated into both the *śrīvidyā* and the intricacies of the ritual. Ritual duties are delegated according to a calendrical pattern with senior members taking charge during festival times. To describe all the rites and activities surrounding the *śrīcakra* at just one of the temples would require more space than the present investigation permits. The rituals discussed here focus on observations made during one important ritual period, the autumn festival of the nine nights (*śāradanavarātri*).

The *navarātri* or "nine nights" festivals, especially the one occuring in the autumn rather than spring (*vasanta*) season, are the most important annual ritual periods for Srividya tradition. It is marked by worship of the goddess in nine aspects each a form of the three consorts of the *trimūrti*, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and is common to all Saiva temples. While it is clear that *navarātri* is not a Srīvidyā festival *per se*, it an important annual Śākta festival throughout most of India. In Bengal the center of ritual attention are the various aspects of Kālī but in the south, especially in Tamil Nāḍu, the emphasis lies on Śākti's beneficent or *saumya* aspects. This regional emphasis on the beneficent Śakti has obvious implications for Srīvidyā worshippers in the south: it is the most auspicious and ritually significant period of the entire year. It is quite common, for example, for Śrīvidyā adepts to perform the full

śrīcakra pūjā everyday (or night) for the nine nights and to augment this with homas and other extended forms of worship (such as prolonged periods of recitation of LSN or other stotras and stavas).

At Śaiva temples, and specifically at the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Śrī Laṅka, presided over by priests belonging to "Guru" Mandali, an everyday worship of the śrīcakra during the navarātri festival serves as the central focus of ritual activities and popular worship. It should be emphasized that there are no textual precedents for śrīcakra worship or any of the common forms of Śrīvidyā worship (such as the recital of LSN, LTS or SL, or Śrīvidya homas, etc.) in classical sources, such as Śaiva Āgamas, that normally direct the course of a temple's ritual activities. As Fuller has shown in his study of the priests of the Mīṇākṣī temple of Madurai the authoritative and theoretical prescriptions of the Āgamas are not always the most reliable guide to the performance of actual temple rites.[27] The priests of Muneśvaram, however, acknowledge openly that the worship conducted within the temple to the śrīcakra has no parallel elsewhere, whether it be the heightened ritual activity of the festival time or the daily practice. They have made what is essentially a private, family decision to introduce worship that is otherwise not prescribed, that is, to bring a private form of Tantrism

into the public setting of a temple.

Predictably, the priests of Muneśvaram are reticent to call their worship Tantric or to refer to Śrīvidyā as a sect of Śākta Tantrism. The term carries unwanted connotations that do not apply to the conservative Brahmin customs of the group. Most initiated male family members do not study Śrīvidyā sources other than as ritual guides and hence remain aloof from the tradition's theological controversies and interpretations. But none would fail to assert Śrīvidyā as completely in consonance with the norms of established orthodoxy.

Only one member of the family can be considered an intellectual concerned with theology and historical tradition. He explains the position of the family and temple:

> We introduced the worship of the Devī in the form of the Śrīcakra into our temples so that everyone might benefit from it. We consider it unique but since it follows all the orthodox customs there can be no objection. What goes on in the temple is completely under our control. All the boys in the family who stay to become priests receive initiation into Śrīvidyā but only a few of us maintain a private ritual practice outside the formal worship inside. The difference between what I do privately and what is done within the temple is only a matter of degree. Outside the temple I cannot approach the elaborate abhiśeka [ritual bathing of the image] or the number of offerings (upācāra). But the few of us who keep an outside practice also spend much time in meditation on the mantra which is not done by all who are qualified to do the ritual. To be a priest of the temple we consider a hereditary right only and with this comes the right to

> Śrīvidyā, but not all of the priests would otherwise be Śrīvidyā upāsakas. And there are many Śrīvidyā upāsakas even within our own lineage who are not priests of the temple nor qualified to be. To be born into this kind of temple worship is a great honor but those who are not and yet are Śrīvidyā upāsakas are sometimes much more sincere in their private practice.
>
> We believe that Śrīvidyā can be for everyone and so the śrīcakra pūjā is performed outside the sanctum on the festival days for anyone to see. Many Buddhists and non-Hindus come to the temple during this time to see the pūjā and to gain the blessings of Devī. It is appropriate to do this worship because it [i.e., the śrīcakra] is the highest form of the goddess and the ritual is strictly done by initiated priests.[28]

During the śārada navarātri the Muneśvaram temple draws sizable crowds considering its location in an area dominated by Singhala-speaking Buddhists. Several devotees indicated that they were Buddhists who come each year to partake in the prasāda of the festival worship. The śrīcakra is worshipped twice daily in "special" rites that augment the usual forms of daily ritual. Placed on a raised platform, the śrīcakra is plainly visible and the designated head priest for the occasion supervises the activities of others.

The primary ritual, the śrīcakra navāvaraṇa pūjā, is itself remarkable only for its precision and elaborate detail, otherwise its performance here is not unusual. It proceeds much the same way as the private worship of the "Guru" Mandali without any suggestion of Kaula influence even in the form of symbolic substitutes (such as the "fish

spoon" used to indicate the matsya makāra). Were it not for its being a public display of the usually private performance of śrīcakra pūjā there would be little reason for the ordinary person to believe that the ritual was beyond the prescriptions of ordinary temple worship.

This single example may, in fact, provide the clearest evidence for the presence of the non-sanctioned worship of the śrīcakra in public forums, especially in the Śaiva temples of south India and Śrī Laṅka. While other temples in which the śrīcakra is present (these are discussed separately below) have no longer maintained a living tradition that can adequately account for its presence, these Śrī Laṅka-based temples testify to the influence of priestly management on the traditions of worship.

The strong influence of Brahmin-dominated (or exclusively Brahmin) lineages on Śrīvidyā is apparent from the period of its incipient written history, as is the movement towards "sanitizing" Kaula influences. Thus it appears likely that the same groups of Brahmins who have acted as priests and leaders of the religious communities are responsible for the introduction of the essentially private Śrīvidyā worship in the public temples. The reasons for this seem twofold: first is the theological conviction that this worship is "superior" not only in content but in form, that the śrīcakra is the "highest form" of the goddess

and to worship her in this way is only appropriate. Worshipping the highest and obviously less anthropomorphic aspect would confer a certain prestige on the temple itself. Secondly there is the increasing influence of traditional orthodoxy on the private forms of Śrīvidyā worship. With professional and personal religious endeavors intertwined, high caste adepts had little recourse but to make Śrīvidyā a part of their public lives. The inclusion of Śrīvidyā in temples brought it clearly within the folds of traditional orthodoxy and sometimes served as an alternative to private performance: what is done for one's own "benefit" privately can be done openly for the sake of all. In the "sanitized" environment of public temple worship, Brahmin votaries of the tradition could distinguish their practices and interpretations from "Tantrics". One can observe a parallel in textual sources, such as the SL, which give no outward appearance of Tantric influences and, it seems, quite deliberately avoid even the term Tantra. Some historical adepts, such as Lakṣmīdhara, are said to have resisted efforts to bring private and secret practices of Śrīvidyā into public view but in instances in which Brahmin adepts exercised a particularly strong influence on local temple worship it would appear only natural to introduce ritual even when theological interpretations remain private. The introduction of Śrīvidyā into these "unsanctioned" contexts

must be the result of its increasing popularity among a significant faction of Brahmins empowered to shape and determine temple traditions.

The "Guru" Mandali priests have not altered their standards of qualification (adhikāra) other than extending the hereditary right of the temple priest to an initiation into SrĪvidyā; an initiation that invariably originated in the private traditions of the sect. One priest noted that initiation remains private though instruction in the ritual is, properly speaking, the result of "on the job training". Whether the priests maintain a private form of practice is a completely personal decision. This partially private, partially public structure also seems characteristic of the historical situation surrounding the introduction of SrĪvidyā worship into temples: the passionate and personal conviction of those originally responsible for initiating the worship within the temple is not necessarily passed on to heirs with a "birthright" to initiation. This would also help to explain the vitality of ŚrĪvidyā today as a private tradition and its obscure and sometimes unaccounted for presence in temples in which initiation has not been "earned" by qualification. In other instances within temples, elements of ŚrĪvidyā, such as the śrĪcakra, are present but traditions of worship, maintained and passed in private forms of instruction, have either been lost or are

in an obviously deteriorated condition.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 1: "Murugan"

"Murugan" is a non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā initiate belonging to the _viśvakarman_ or "carpenter's caste". He has earned his reputation as an adept primarily for his abilities to manufacture _śrīcakras_ and as the trustee of a foundation devoted to religious ecumenicalism. "Murugan" maintains that Śrīvidyā is the "original" form of religious spirituality and that it offers an alternative to all "narrow" affiliations. While he is himself openly Śākta, "Murugan" maintains that Śrīvidyā is not strictly a form of Śākta Tantrism nor even "Hindu" since it transcends any and all sectarianism. He has little interest in the intellectual disputes within the tradition though he has a lucid grasp of its ritual intricacies and the contents of major textual sources.

"Murugan" was one of many adepts who claimed a close personal connection with the Śaṅkara tradition in Kāñcipuram and, in accordance with Brahmin-influenced conservatism, maintained that Śrīvidyā contained no "objectionable", i.e., Kaula elements. Though a non-Brahmin by birth, "Murugan" had effectively conformed to the external forms of Brahmin

orthodoxy in order to gain initial access to the worship traditions of that community; he has, for example, become a vegetarian teetotaler which is, at least theoretically, a customary requirement of south Indian Brahminism.

"Murugan's" own initiation took place some twenty years ago, at which time he committed himself to a project that includes the construction of a "temple for all faiths". The focus of worship within this temple is the śrīcakra and on the temple grounds is an "Institute" for the study of "spiritual issues". The project has attracted a great deal of interest and financial resources and is presently raising funds by subscription. He has financed these efforts not only by donation but through his skill as an artisan of images, particularly the śrīcakra. These icons he sells in a private shop and supplies to individuals and institutions on order. He spoke proudly of the Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcipuram's involvement in the instillation of a śrīcakra in a temple near Madras. The Śaṅkarācārya apparently visited the scene and "conferred his blessings on this and the other projects", including the building of his Śrī Meru Foundation "devoted to the study of spiritual life".

Privately "Murugan" mentioned that his ritual involvement in śrīcakra worship was limited: he concentrated, he said, on silent repetition of the mantra. This practice of minimal ritual involvement is common to a

very substantial number of initiates whose initiation appears to have been confined to the mantra. His private discipline, he said, did not directly involve the work of the Foundation he has established to study "spirituality". He specifically mentioned that Śrīvidyā, though only one aspect of study within the Institute, would be the central form of worship. Since Śrīvidyā was the "ancient Vedic religion" it necessarily was, in "Murugan's" assessment, the "original" faith belonging to all humankind.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 2: "Sītā"

"Sītā" is an elderly Tamil smārta Brahmin woman who has spent most of her married life in north India. She belongs to no particular Mandali and her association with Śrīvidyā comes through a variety of sources. This situation, however lacking in conformity with the strict sense of lineage presented in textual sources, is not uncommon. Many individual adepts have gained initiation and ritual instructions in a piecemeal fashion over a period of years.

Though her father was a Śrīvidyā adept versed in text and ritual, "Sītā" received her first initiation, into the kādi form of the pañcadaśī śrīvidyā in 1973, from Svarūpānandasarasvatī, the present pīṭhācārya of the Śaṅkara

maṭha in Dwaraka, Gujarat. The Swami gave no extensive ritual instructions and placed no restrictions on the use or repetition of the mantra. She recalls having what she described as a "mystical experience" in the presence of the Swami:

> I went to Rāñchi for the *duśera* festival to see the Swamiji. He invited me in to sit with him for *pūjā*, it was a *sahasranāma pūjā* [i.e., a ritual recital of the LSN]. During the recital of the *sahasranāma* I felt a powerful feeling in my spine that I later identified as the *kuṇḍalinī* [i.e., the esoteric yogic power identified with Śakti]. After the ritual (*pūjā*) the Swami said to perform the repetition (*japa*) of the mantra regularly and in seven years the complete *sādhana* including *śrīcakra pūjā* and *nyāsa* (i.e., the process of identifying sounds with the body and the *śrīcakra*) would come to me. He didn't say how this would happen but seven years later in Bombay I met another *guru* of Śrīvidyā. He initiated me into the *mahāṣoḍaśī* [*śrīvidyā*] mantra, taught me the *śrīcakra pūja* and gave me a *paddhati* to follow. Sometime later in Madras he explained the whole *navāvaraṇa pūjā*. The *guru* is a Gujurati Brahmin though he regularly uses wine in his ritual. He too belongs to no organized Mandali but comes from a distinguished line of teachers. He also makes *śrīcakras* of gold and of glass [i.e., the so-called *sphaṭika* form] but gives them only to initiates who ask for them. But regularly I do the *LSN* and only *śrīcakra pūjā* on the special days [viz., the full moon and first day of the Tamil month]. In south India there is too much concern for ritual and orthodoxy while in north India there is more inner sincerity. I do not use wine in the ritual but I see it as a higher qualification.[29]

The *śrīcakra* that "Sītā" had in her possession was not only in the *meru* or *kailāsa* form, as she called it, but was constructed over a two-dimensional *bhūprastāra śrīcakra*.

This, she explained, followed the instructions she received from her second guru who had received them in a dream. The particular detail of the śrīcakra's construction she discovered only after her father had dropped the cakra accidentally and it had broken into two pieces. Prior to this she had not been told of the peculiar nature of the cakra or of the instructions her guru later said had come in a dream. Following a ritual questioning in which a Keralite Namboodri Brahmin was asked what should be done with the cakra, now actually two śrīcakras, she received a sanction to perform the pūjā to both "halves".

> When I saw the two pieces of the cakra I realized that this signified the presence of both Śiva and Śakti. I knew something more would come to me in time.[30]

When the Śaṅkarācārya came to know of her further initiation some years later he augmented her ritual practice by giving her a small Śiva liṅga and explained the ritual significance of the identification of sounds with cakra and body, i.e., nyāsa.

The Śaṅkarācārya, she went on to explain, included no makāras in his own practice and this seemed to her perfectly appropriate for the Śāṅkara tradition. However, she observed in her own observation that nearly all north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts use wine in their śrīcakra rituals though they prefer substitutes (pratinidhi) for other makāra

prescriptions. There is reason to believe that "Sītā's" opinion on this matter reflects the actual situation: the socially conservative southern adepts, and more especially Brahmin and Brahmin influenced adepts, cannot abide the use of "prohibited" substances; in the north the use of the makāras among Brahmins appears as a deliberate effort to assert the Tantric nature of the discipline.

"Sītā" attributed an improvement in her health and continued material good fortune to Śrīvidyā discipline saying, as nearly all adepts do, that the practice is designed to meet all human aims (puruṣārthas). But, she asserted, for Śrīvidyā adepts certain privileges and customs should be observed in order to maintain their "good standing", that is, to insure that prosperity continues. For example, she said that there should be no formal funeral rites for an adept since the discipline (sādhana) insured no future rebirth. Neither is it necessary or even desirable to go to ordinary temples so long as the śrīcakra is regularly worshipped privately in the home. Temples, she contended, were filled with "outside" influences that may obstruct progress for the adept.

While it is a common belief that Śrīvidyā initiation insures the present birth to be the last and that liberation is inevitable, "Śītā" was exceptional in her insistence on wanting no part of the customary forms of funeral rites

typical to Tamil smàrtas. Her family acknowledges her wishes but it is not clear that they will abide by them. Certainly the vast majority of Brahmin south Indian adepts did not wish to break with religious and social conventions or draw attention to themselves or their family. While it is also common for Śrīvidyā adepts to be generally less interested in public temple worship (unless they are themselves associated directly with a temple) and to concentrate on private worship, few make so direct an effort to stay away from the public forms of worship as "Sītā". The vast majority of adepts, as individuals or as members of a semi-private lineage, maintain the appearances of a pious Hindu giving little or no indication that they are Srīvidyà initiates or that they consider themselves members of a spiritual elite.

"Sīta" maintained that she had gained certain powers from her discipline, including the power to become possessed of deceased ancestors and other persons upon request, but that she had not deliberately sought such abilities. This too is not an uncommon feature among adepts though there are some who feel such activities debase and even embarrass the tradition. This latter opinion is remarkable if only because of the tradition's emphatic claims of attaining siddhis at the initial stages of practice. None of those claiming such powers assert that they have deliberately used

their Śrīvidya discipline to gain them but all attribute the ability as secondary result of the spiritual discipline. As "Sītā" explained:

> Śrīvidyā confers many abilities but none of these should be sought after. They will come naturally and by the grace of the guru.[31]

Like other adepts, "Sītā" also engages in rituals comparable to the prayogas of the SL (but not these specifically) in order to obtain certain material or spiritual results such as the alleviation of illness or the quelling of some disturbing force. These can be done, she remarked, by the adept for someone else's sake. Initiation into Srīvidya, however, is restricted because,

> . ...the powers and abilities gained in Srīvidyā can be used for almost any purpose including harming others or doing immoral things. It is secret because it is powerful and is itself a source of power. Without proper controls it can be misused.[32]

In other respects, she noted, the guru gave tremendous latitude in individual practice. This is not the least bit uncommon among adepts belonging to lineages lacking a structured hierarchy. Once initiated disciples may see their guru only on very rare occasions and sometimes never again. The responsibility to maintain and develop the practice of Śrīvidyā is left solely to the individual. While not in keeping with the usual sense of the closely monitored and personally directed Tantric relationship of

guru and disciple, this situation is not the least bit uncommon. In some cases further instruction or directions come in dreams or visions but it seems clear that Śrīvidyā in practice does not always conform to the picture of guru/disciple intimacy emphasized in textual sources. Disciples feel no less bonded to their teachers though their instruction may, in fact, come from a number of sources and lack any extended period with a guru.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 3: "Śrīdhara

"Śrīdhara" is also a Tamil smārta Brahmin living in Madras. He has earned his livlihood most of his adult life through the publication of books on Śrīvidyā and other aspects of Śaiva/Śākta religion, especially regarding practices in south India. He too attributes his success to Śrīvidyā though apparently he has not won the favor of other Madras-based groups or individuals. Members of both "Ānanda" and "Gāyatrī" Maṇḍalis were highly critical of his written efforts and questioned also his personal integrity. Writing under a pseudonym, "Śrīdhara" nevertheless publishes both his picture and address in his books and proclaiming himself an authority on Śrīvidyā and on the interpretation of Śaiva/Śākta practices and traditions. My interviews with him confirmed the impression he has left on others,

especially regarding his own inflated opinion of himself as an authority on Śrīvidyā tradition.

Despite the criticism he has received and his self proclaimed expertise, "Śrīdhara" is an interesting case study. He is a disciple of the very popular guru of "Ānanda" Mandali but has long since fell out with any of this teacher's other disciples. While he claimed that he did not himself practice the makāras he maintained that this "higher discipline" was, in fact, practiced by his own guru and continues to be found in south India. There is no corroborating evidence to this effect but the possibility is not entirely unlikely. Śrīvidyā, he said, was the secret teaching of the Vedas and he cited the Ṛg Veda passage noted by Bhāskararāya and others as evidence of the mantra's hidden form. As part of his own practice he claimed to worship a śrīcakra that is "over five hundred years old" and has been in a continuous state of worship through successive generations of initiates. This continuity in the worship of this single object brought with it many advantages, including the "residual effects of the great upāsakas who have worshipped it before."

The notion that a ritual object such as a śrīcakra is in some way comparable to a relic of a saint is not uncommon among contemporary adepts. To have access or possession of any artifact of a past great Śrīvidyā votary is considered

both a privilege and, to some extent, a responsibility. Objects such as "Srīdhara's" *śrīcakra* are usually passed within lineages but are sometimes bestowed as gifts or given to institutions such as temples. The power of the object is both inherent and as a ritual artifact, in this case an artifact of worship in which the ritual power of past owners is believed to have accumulated in the physical form. A *śrīcakra*, for example, once worshipped possesses an intrinsic power whether or not it continues to be used and by its configuration is considered potentially powerful. Śrīvidyā sources never mention specifically ideas concerning relics or the continuity of practices involving a single *śrīcakra*. Śrīvidyā adepts, however, have clearly made the fate of such ritual objects and other possessions of a guru important elements in the continuity of lineage traditions. In material possessions, relics and other ritual objects the transmission of power is secured through an imagined or historical relationship to past sources of authority.

Śrīvidyā, "Śrīdhara" further asserted, rests on five interrelated principles: (1) guru, (2) mantra, (3) *pujā* or ritual, (4) yoga and (5) *jñāna* or knowledge. These, according to him, are invariable factors in any Śrīvidyā practice. This summary does, in fact, approximate the

elements common in most Śrīvidyā lineages. But like so many of "Srīdhara's" discussions, his inability to elaborate on the sources of the summary indicated that his expertise was indeed not what he claimed it to be. His overall aim, "Śrīdhara" said, was public service and to "bring Srīvidyā to the world".

"Śrīdhara" is certainly not exemplary of the tradition's ideals of qualification (adhikāra) but neither is he lacking in peers. The number of individuals who seem to have gravitated to the intellectual and ritual sophistication of Śrīvidyā in order to promote their own activities---whether it be for employment or prestige within a community---is quite remarkable considering the "closed" or private orientation of the tradition and the scrupulous care taken by some adepts to limit initiation. But the appeal of Śrīvidyā at least in the past fifty years has provided the necessary impetus. Certainly the wealth of information now publicly available in the vernacular Indian languages has permanently reshaped the cast of those claiming to be initiates.

E. Remarks on the Comparison of North and South Indian Śrīvidya

Though my contact with organized groups in north India was extremely limited when compared to those in south India, I did meet a number of individual north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. Even with Dr. Sundaramoorthy present or with a personal introduction, the majority of north Indian adepts were more reluctant to discuss the tradition openly. Several refused to discuss their own personal practice but agreed to talk openly about theories or concepts.

In general, the north Indian practitioners were far less concerned with any public or semi-private form of involvement such as it is in south India and also less observant of conforming to the norms of conventional Brahmin orthodoxy as it is regionally interpreted in north India. Two informants, both Brahmins, openly advocated the use of the *pañcamakāras* and claimed that Śrīvidyā as a Tantric *sādhana* clearly prescribed their use in its highest forms. In effect, these north Indian adepts reflect an image that seems more in consonance with Kaula textual traditions and the illustrations of past observers such as Sir John Woodroffe. Few adepts expressed any reservation about using the term Tantra as applying to Śrīvidyā though all acknowledged "Tantrism" had suffered misunderstanding in minds of "ordinary" people.

A number of informants said that Śrīvidyā was still very actively practiced in north India, especially in Benares, in Mahārāṣṭra and Rājasthan and gave examples of common interpretations. The basic pattern of śrīcakra ritual conforms to south Indian forms with important regional differences in evidence with regard to "local customs" (deśācāra). For example, in south India customary prescriptions strictly prohibit men from wearing a shirt during any such ritual; this common practice applies universally and appears to carry over from the regional practice of removing the shirt before coming before the main image of a temple (as is still the case in Cidambaram before Naṭarāja or in Kanyakumārī before the goddess Kanyakumārī). North Indian adepts dismissed the importance of this custom, in the words of one, as the "usual preoccupation of southerners with ritual".33

Despite such regional distinctions, north Indian adepts performed the ritual activities common to Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit based tradition. Certain Sanskrit sources while present in the north, do not enjoy the same degree of popularity in practice. For example, the LSN's popularity as a stotra crosses regional lines though as part of the śrīcakra ritual its recitation among initiates appears more frequently in southern India. The same can be said of the mantric repetition of the Tripurā Upaniṣad.

Perhaps the most obvious regional difference between northern and southern adepts is that northern adepts are less inclined to elaborate the ritual details (such as elaborating the use of vessels, i.e., pātrasādhana) but more willing to accept scriptural prescription literally, such as including the pañcamakāras. Consequently, the north Indian adepts with whom I had contact were far less "selective" in the reading of scriptures and, in the execution of ritual, were more willing to adhere to the literal provisions of sources. Oral traditions still provide substantial input into the interpretation and content of ritual performance but written texts seem far less manipulated to suit the often unstated codes of convention that so permeate southern Brahmin culture. Written prescriptions within the classical Sanskrit texts, such as PKS and VT, have a greater direct influence on the activities of northern adepts and are frequently adopted verbatim into the ritual handbooks. On the whole it is clear that Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā tradition has not undergone the same degree of transformation in northern India as it has in the south especially with regard to the "acceptability" of theories or practices.

North Indian lineages also seem to have been less concerned with publication and semi-private organizational activities. This may be attributable to several factors in

south Indian culture, especially with regard to Tamil Brahmins. First, there is a remarkable degree of religious activity sponsored by small, local groups of Brahmins throughout Tamil Nāḍu. Having become a recognized minority politically out of favor with the forces of the Dravidian movement for at least the past fifty years, religious organizational activity remains one of the means of maintaining community identity. The majority of Brahmin-dominated (or exclusively Brahmin) Śrīvidyā lineages in south India brought their sponsored, semi-private activities to the attention of the larger Brahmin community and have frequently obtained financial and other support from Brahmin patrons. In a sense, the heightened public image of certain groups reflects the larger movement towards caste community organization and identity under the current circumstances.

Second, Tamil smārta Brahmins while not temple priests by profession (though frequently domestic priests) often have very close ties with Śaiva temples. Śrīvidyā lineages have sometimes tied themselves to a particular temple and offer their activities as a kind of extension of the public temple's duties, that is, as a result of a special theological relationship with the local deity. Such involvement would suggest not only the perception of piety (and hence a feeling of prestige) but a sense of intimacy and perhaps even influence on the deity itself in the eyes

of others. Indeed there is at least circumstantial evidence of the influence of sectarian Śrīvidyā tradition on the activities and theological associations of temples with which they have no formal relationship. The Mīṇākṣī temple in Madurai offers an interesting instance: within the temple are sold various portraits of the goddess usually purchased with the intent to display her either at home or in the work place. One such portrait (available at the temple's own shop rather than independently) places a *śrīcakra* directly below a common anthropomorphic image of Mīṇākṣī. The connection could not be more direct though it goes largely unobserved. The goddess Mīṇākṣī's identification with Sakti in the form of the *śrīcakra* is simply part of a local tradition with no scriptural source or oral lore offering an explanation. The influence of Śrīvidyā, however private and secretive, is evident in the sanctioned, "public" theological understanding of the goddess Mīṇākṣī. This situation reflects an influence which could have only come about through a deliberate effort to associate the cakra with the goddess, whether or not it is meant to convey, as it does to Śrīvidyā adepts, that Mīṇākṣī's "highest and most subtle form" is the *śrīcakra*. The implication is that of superiority, not only of the local aspect of deity who is considered the highest form of Śakti but of the worshippers of that form. However the link was intended, the result is

clear: the image of the famed goddess Mīṇākṣī, who is not otherwise associated with the *śrīcakra* through myth or legend, has been *publicly* associated with Srīvidyā tradition---at least in the eyes of its adepts. The extent to which this particular identification is a direct result of the influence of *certain* Śrīvidyā adepts historically is not clear. The movement has a whole, however, has left its mark and with it another association in a public setting between initiated members of lineages and the non-initiated majority.

I would not mean to suggest that north Indian Śrīvidya lineages have had less influence on temple affairs, deliberate or otherwise, but that south Indian Hindu culture has been more focused on worship within large temples as a center of social and religious interaction. North Indian adepts do not display the same interest in identifying Lalitā with regional aspects of the goddess and consequently place less stress on temple worship and public displays of the *śrīcakra*. Not facing the same social pressures of identity as their southern caste peers, Śrīvidyā lineages dominated by Brahmins in north India are more restricted in access, more private in orientation and less influenced by the perception of others.

1. Madras, December, 1984.

2. This literature is usually privately published and includes advertisements from sponsors much like what is seen in a regularly published magazine. Groups do not appear to be particularly selective in their acceptance of patronage though within Brahmin dominated groups there is little effort made to solicit non-Brahmin donations.

3. These are discussed below in the section on public performances conducted by private institutions such as temples and formal organizations such as the Śaṅkara _maṭhas_.

4. It should be noted that I was not permitted to observe any of the group's worship (being not born a _smārta_ Brahmin) and that Dr. Sundaramoorthy and I were not able to probe as deeply into the performance aspects of this group as we were in others. In fact, "Jyotiṣa" was not a little surprised to find out that I was both an initiate and something of a scholar of Śrīvidyā tradition. It was clear that he did not approve of my personal involvement.

5. The opinion of a number of adepts, including "Nataraja" of "Guru" Mandali profiled below.

6. "Jyotiṣa" of "Samaya" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

7. Certain questions remain, however, for the student of the ritual. For example, there arises a question of "placement" regarding the _gurumaṇḍala_ in which the three generations of gurus of any _lineage_ are honored by being identified in the space above the _śrīcakra_'s central triangle. According the Samaya _version of the śrīcakra_, this space is now occupied by the _bindu_. "Jyotiṣa" _did_ not go into the details of the ritual _and_ only said that there were no changes from the "usual" pattern. One can only interpret this to mean that the _gurumaṇḍala_ continues to be worshipped as it is when the _śrīcakra_ is in its "Kaula" placement.

8. A senior member of the lineage, Tiruchirappalli, January, 1985.

9. Madurai, April, 1985.

10. Madurai, April, 1985.

11. Madurai, January, 1985.

12. Madurai, April, 1985.

13. Madurai, April, 1985.

14. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

15. Madurai, April, 1985.

16. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, June, 1985.

17. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali who acts as a guru to several members, Madurai, June, 1985.

18. Madurai, April, 1985.

19. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

20. "Naṭarāja", Madurai, June, 1985.

21. Madurai, June, 1985.

22. "Guru" Mandali member, Delhi, November, 1984.

23. Madurai, June, 1985.

24. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

25. Cf., Setubandha on NSA, Introductory remarks to v.1.

26. "Agastya" of "Gayatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

27. See Fuller, C.F., Servants of the Goddess, The Priests of a South Indian Temple. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp.169ff.

28. From a series of interviews conducted in April and June, 1985 in Madurai.

29. From a series of interviews conducted in Madurai, June, 1985.

30. Madurai, June, 1985.

31. Madurai, June, 1985.

32. Madurai, June, 1985.

33. From an interview with a north Indian adept in Benares, September, 1985.

Part Two

The Living Śrividyā Tradition in south India

Chapter Three

Śrīvidyā in Saiva Temples and the Involvement of the Uninitiated

A. Introductory Remarks

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage is its development of public forms of practice involving non-initiates. As we observed in the Profiles of Mandalis, Śrīvidyā has found a place in such public Hindu settings as Śaiva/Śākta temples in which the śrīcakra pūjā and other rituals are performed. Adepts are entirely responsible for the continuity of Śrīvidyā's public worship and have deliberately brought their private practices into public purview. At least three reasons for this can be surmised: (1) public worship is often an extension of private sādhana conducted by the purveyors of a particular temple's traditions and, in some cases, public involvement substitutes for private practice; (2) private, esoteric forms of worship have a powerful attraction for non-initiates attracted to Śrīvidyā's ritual sophistication and, more especially, to the extensive use of mantras and yantras. The use of such traditionally secret and "powerful" objects contributes to elevating the status of those who employ them in worship; and (3) Śrīvidyā adepts view their worship not merely as a personal form of

religious discipline but one performed for the benefit of all. Extending worship into temple settings seems appropriate since in these contexts the formal ritual allows the greatest number of passive participants and creates the impression that the performance is not merely a private affair.

However the appearance of Śrīvidyā in public settings is explained within Śrīvidyā or temple traditions, the historical situation in the majority of cases remains obscure. Temple records and written traditions are unfortunately of little help while contemporary oral traditions are largely unverifiable.

B. Śrīvidyā in Public Settings

In the south Indian setting it is clear that the introduction of Śrīvidyā rituals into temples, such as śrīcakra navāvaraṇa pūjā, into temples or an association with elements of practice, such as the śrīcakra, is the result of the efforts of high caste initiates in positions of authority within the temple. Be they politicians, patrons or temple priests, these initiates have had sufficient influence to bring elements of Śrīvidyā into the mainstreams of temple life. Efforts are frequently overt and deliberate, such as it appears in the case of the temple of Muneśvaram in Chilaw, Śrī Laṅka or in the Kāmākṣī temple

of Kāñcipuram, but there are also situations in which oral lore alone forms the basis of the local tradition, such as within the Mīṇākṣī temple of Madurai.

Contemporary adepts are deeply divided over the issue of the appropriateness and role of Śrīvidyā worship in public settings. Since worship focuses on the śrīcakra rather than the śrīvidyā there are different sets of restrictions concerning its ritual use and interpretation; these conditions are accompanied by different attitudes. The cakra considered as an intrinsically powerful configuration has led some adepts to disapprove of its worship in any explicit or exoteric public context. Others insist that since it is a form of the supreme Śakti (in fact, the "highest" (parā) form) its worship in public settings increases benefits for all participants and includes those not immediately present. The effectiveness of the worship, they contend, depends on worship performed by a qualified adept; since no secret mantras (such as the śrīvidyā in its mūlamantra form) or interpretations accompany the ritual performance there is no inherent danger or reason to restrict access to witnessing of the pūjā.

Whether or not adepts approve of public Śrīvidyā ritual performances, they must nonetheless interpret such events since they invariably do occur and are comparable to the

rituals of the private tradition. One adept of the "Guru" Mandali who was not among the hereditary priests of Muneśvaram explained his own attitude:

> There is certainly room for Śrīvidyā in other than strictly private forms of worship. But what one sees in the temples is vastly different than in private ritual worship, especially the navāvarana [śrīcakra] pūjā. While it appears to be identical in form there is far less emphasis on the individual adept's own ritual position---he does not spend much time doing the repetition (japa) of the mantra and often restricts what he says aloud in order to conceal the mantras from the unqualified. In essence, he performs the worship for others, not for the sake of his own discipline. This is in keeping with the spirit of the tradition, certainly, but it is not the same as what is done to advance in personal discipline (sādhana) and in offering the ritual act for the general benefit of the world. The uninitiated devotee gets only a general benefit from witnessing such rituals or receiving the prasāda. But you will find that only a very few pay any attention to the ritual and it is even the case that initiates do not involve themselves as they might unless they themselves are performing the ritual.[1]

Other adepts not approving of public displays of Śrīvidyā must still explain its presence in temples and other semi-public settings, such as its enshrinement beside the tomb (samādhi) of a deceased adept.[2] These dissenters interpret public worship as less "efficacious" in general since it is diluted by the involvement, even passive involvement, of the uninitiated. One explains in his own terms how Śrīvidyā made the transition from private to public settings:

> Śrīvidyā is such a powerful and compelling teaching that it is little wonder it has become popular even though it was never designed to be. When it is found in temples or in other places where it is no longer confined to initiates, then it no longer serves the same purposes. The person performing the _pūjā_ cannot possibly be involved in the practice in the same way because the mantras and ritual acts are all done aloud and so that everyone can see them. Sometimes when the ritual is not performed publicly and yet the _śrīcakra_ is worshipped, like in the Kāmākṣī temple, there is not enough attention paid to the _śrīcakra_ itself. We must accept that Srīvidyā is part of the traditions of these places but it cannot be said to be equal to what is done in private by the adept transforming the ritual into internal sacrifice (_antaryāga_).[3]

There is also ambivalence expressed concerning the cakra as an intrinsically powerful configuration and its being "empowered" by proper qualified ritual use. But unlike the mantra, the cakra's configuration cannot be completely concealed in public settings as are its meanings and ritual interpretations. The power of the mantra lies primarily in its being a "sound essence" paralleling the spiritual/material universe and thus its interpretation, however significant, is deemed secondary for ritual efficacy. In the case of the _śrīcakra_, however, there is a greater emphasis laid on ritual knowledge and the interpretation of the configuration as a representation of the universe conceived esoterically. Simply to come into visual contact with the _śrīcakra_ is not to be confronted with its most powerful aspect, that is, as a ritual object

understood to be a manifestation of Śakti. Even permanently installed _śrīcakras_ do not command from the uninitiated the same attention as anthropomorphic images. Unlike the familiar anthropomorphic image, the cakra's abstract form creates more mystery than accessibility for the uninitiated devotee. In the case of the mantra, the sounds themselves are the central component of ritual efficacy and these need not be part of a public performance.

While most adepts deem the cakra the supreme aspect (_parā_) of the goddess superceding the subtle (_sūkṣma_) mantra, its physical form is not secret in the same manner or to the same degree as the mantra; or at least it has not been so closely guarded a secret. The _śrīcakra_ has become part of the popular ethos of Hindu goddess worship visually identified or somehow associated with Śakti outside Śrīvidya. The same cannot be said of the Śrīvidyā mantra: the mantra's forms and meanings are not a part of the popular lore surrounding the goddess but are limited to the initiated circle of adepts. Some non-initiates many suspect and even have a knowledge of mantras directly associated with the goddess's imagery but none would have contact with the actual mantras without consulting recently printed texts or obtaining them from adepts.

While many non-initiates may consider the cakra abstract and its ritual use obscure or restricted, many

worship it as they do anthropomorphic images. When both types of images are present in a single shrine, however, the cakra clearly takes second place in popular worship. While the physical cakra may be deemed a valuable and powerful object in a way that a mere decorative anthropomorphic image of the goddess may not, when the cakra is placed beside a consecrated image, the cakra is clearly of secondary interest to the non-initiate.

The heart of the issue is accessibility, that is, the degree to which a devotee relates and formulates a relationship with the divinity represented or installed in a particular form of imagery. The śrīcakra's configuration is inherently powerful (even if this is qualified in the minds of initiates) and has, as it were, a magical affect on the physical and spiritual environment. A decorative image of the goddess stands as a mere representation of the goddess's presence. When placed side by side and a representational image ritually installed obtains power far greater than the inherent power of the cakra's form. The accessibility of the anthropomorphic form brings it to the forefront of the non-initiate's attentions. It is not necessarily a different kind of power envisioned in the cakra but the level of perceived power and the devotee's access to it. The śrīcakra ritually installed in a permanent shrine lacks the accessibility of an anthropomorphic image though adepts

(and a small minority of non-initiates) may consider it "superior" or a more sublime representation of the divine presence.[4]

The Mīṇākṣī temple of Madurai offers an example of the popular association of the śrīcakra and the anthropomorphic goddess within contemporary temple tradition. Historical materials make no reference to a relationship between Mīṇākṣī and the cakra though, according to some temple priests and Śrīvidyā adepts, oral tradition has perpetuated a relationship from ancient times. Within the Mīṇākṣī temple the śrīcakra has been associated with the Goddess. As in other situations in which there is no historical or formal relationship between the esoteric, private Śrīvidya tradition and the prescribed temple traditions, Śrīvidyā is visible by a direct association of the figure of the beneficent goddess and the śrīcakra. From the standpoint of the Srīvidyā adept the general implication is that wherever the śrīcakra is present the goddess is in her supreme and beneficent form and is identified with the particular localized Śakti. From another perspective a different conclusion may be drawn: it may not be the śrīcakra's presence that determines or identifies the goddess as an aspect of the supreme Śakti but the goddess's local aspect

which has led to an association with the _śrīcakra_. From the adept's point of view the _śrīcakra_'s presence indicates both Śiva and Śakti, the female aspect being the dominant and quasi-independent form of the supreme goddess (_parāśakti_). For the devotee, the _śrīcakra_ provides another indication of Mīṇākṣī's mystical (or esoteric) dimensions as well as suggests her superiority with respect to other forms of divinity.

The Mīṇākṣī temple's written traditions give no indication of any formal ritual or historical relationship between Śrīvidyā and the various forms of daily and occasional worship. Yet there is oral lore passed among the temple's hereditary priests and others which perpetuates various visual and material forms of association. According to one oral tradition, the image of Mīṇākṣī within the inner sanctum of the temple actually stands upon a _śrīcakra_.

The goddess is, according to these priests, standing atop Mt. Sumeru on the _bindu_ of the _śrīcakra_. Like other aspects of the oral lore, this tradition is unverifiable if only because there is no occasion for moving the permanently installed image to observe what lies between the icon and the base. Curiously, other Śrīvidyā adepts with no formal links to the Mīṇākṣī temple independently corroborated this tradition when asked if they knew of any temple in which the _śrīcakra_ is present but not immediately visible or apparent.

The priests went on to say that no particular worship of the *śrīcakra* is performed because its worship is subsumed by rituals offered to the anthropomorphic image; furthermore, the priests indicated that the tradition is a secret and not known even to many of their colleagues. The cakra, they maintain, was part of the original construction of the temple and has been part of the esoteric tradition ever since.

According to another oral tradition the *śrīcakra* lies in a chamber below the image of the goddess but is no longer worshipped. Several priests I later interviewed expressed no familiarity with this so-called oral, esoteric tradition.

It is difficult to assess why such oral traditions should persist in a temple rich in its own traditional mythology and lore, especially when they have no sound historical or textual basis. Yet it is clear that those perpetuating these ideas believe that the association of the goddess with the *śrīcakra* enhances the stature of both and affirms the ascendancy of Mīnākṣī as an aspect of the supreme Śakti.

Individuals most interested in obtaining a *śrīcakra* or learning more about its relationship with the goddess are mostly urban and middle class Hindus rather than less affluent village folk. This is not to suggest that urban

devotees have a theology that is necessarily more sophisticated than village Hindus or but that their exposure to these images has led to a more conscious association between the goddess's anthropomorphic image and the *śrīcakra*. One might also suggest that the city life is more conducive to a perusal of such religious interests---there is simply a greater breath of religious activity in this environment and more frequent opportunities for organized religious involvement. As a result, the association of local beneficent goddesses with the *śrīcakra* has become an established part of the visual and conceptual structure of the larger pattern of theology and ritual surrounding temple worship in urban Tamil Nāḍu.

There are several popular visual parallels that reflect this direct association between Mīṇākṣī and the *śrīcakra*. Mīṇākṣī in her quasi-independent form as the supreme divinity (that is, standing alone and giving no indication of her relationship to Śiva) is frequently depicted as standing above the *śrīcakra*. Pictures of the goddess in this position are available from a shop under the direct supervision of the temple authorities. There is, at the very least, a tacit acceptance of the association of the goddess with the *śrīcakra* though there is no further official explanation or stated relationship. Even the

casual observer or devotee cannot fail to make a visual association between the image of Mīṇākṣī and the śrīcakra though official statements and literature published by the temple authorities, including comments made by the majority of the hereditary priests, make no mention of any relationship. The relationship, however, is reinforced by the availability of coin-like amulets bearing Mīṇākṣī's form and name in Tamil script on one side and the image of the śrīcakra on the obverse. These amulets are also sold within the many shops inside the temple and in those under the auspices of the temple authorities. Various two- and three-dimensional forms of the śrīcakra are also available in paper and a variety of metals. One of the shop-keepers said this about the amulets and pictures of the śrīcakra:

> Many people come to buy pictures of Devī and of the śrīcakra. Most of them, I would say, know that there is some very definite relationship between the śrīcakra and the goddess but even I do not really understand what it is. We know that one goes with the other. Others are just looking for a yantra to perform some kind of pūjā to because they want something from the god and believe that this will insure its coming. The coins are very popular, many people carry them around or wear them around the neck in order to protect themselves or as a devotion to Devī.

It is not only Mīṇākṣī whose image is imprinted on the obverse of these amulet coins bearing the śrīcakra but also Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram and the image of Śaṅkarācārya. The association of the śrīcakra with other beneficent goddesses

in Tamil Nāḍu is complemented by an explicit link to the Śaṅkara traditions. The Mīṇākṣī temple offers one of the more conspicuous examples of the influence of Śrīvidyā's elements on the popular worship of the goddess in contexts lacking an historical relationship to the tradition _per se_. While in the case of Mīṇākṣī there is no indication of a stated historical relationship with the _śrīcakra_ or its worship in the temple in other cases, such as with the goddess Akhilandeśvarī (near Tiruchirappalli), the link is subtly present: the goddess in this instance wears the _śrīcakra_ as her earrings, said to have been given to her by none other than Śaṅkara himself.

The significant point in these cases is that there is no active worship of the _śrīcakra_ the maintenance of any Śrīvidyā ritual within the temple (such as there is, for example, at Muneśvaram in Śrī Laṅka) and yet the image of the _śrīcakra_ has become quite explicitly part of the goddess' personality. The cakra is not merely an accidental accretion but a means of identifying the goddess with the supreme Śakti through a specific esoteric image. The _śrīcakra_'s presents confirms an association of each localized Devī with a well-known form of the goddess as she appears in the Sanskritic tradtion and thus provides not only a symbol of theological supremacy but serves as a link between local and pan-Indian traditions. As one adept

remarked:

> Since the śrīcakra is the combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras and has the power of both deities, it is not only an image of Devī but one of Śiva---it is complete. When you see it with each [localized] goddess she is usually not seen with Śiva because the cakra has included him...While only a few will know this, it is important because despite the differences you can observe between the various aspects of Devī, the śrīcakra is always the same---it is the complete form of God even though most ordinary people [i.e., non-initiates] do not realize it. I do not know who is responsible for putting the śrīcakra in these places but I do feel that it makes clear the supremacy of Devī in all of her forms.[5]

The goddess Kāmākṣī in Kāñcipuram bears the closest physical resemblance to Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī of any of the various beneficent goddesses of south India. This is surely not coincidental since at the feet of the goddess within the inner sanctum of the temple is installed within a brass basin a two-dimensional (bhūprastāra) śrīcakra made of five metals (pañcalokam). Nearly every depiction of Kāmākṣī includes the śrīcakra and most maintain a literal resemblance to the image within the temple.

While the relationship between the anthropomorphic goddess and the śrīcakra is perhaps more explicit and direct here than in any other temple in south India, there is little question that the majority of devotees seeking the goddess's darśan are interested primarily in the physical image. The śrīcakra is of secondary importance; this is reflected in the manner in which it is treated by the

temple's hereditary priests. The priests, only one of whom is a Śrīvidyā initiate, treat the cakra less reverently than the anthropomorphic goddess. Thus, when distributing to devotees the ritual gifts (*prasāda*) of regularly performed *pūjās*, the priests treat the cakra with less attention, stepping over and around in ways Śrīvidyā adepts find inappropriate.

The chief hereditary priest of the Kāmākṣī temple maintains that the *śrīcakra* has been part of the temple tradition at least since the time of Śaṅkara who is said to have performed a reestablishment ritual (*pūrṇabhiṣeka*) following a desecration by the Buddhists. The temple is presently managed by the Śaṅkara *pīṭha* in Kāñcipuram which maintains authority over both religious and administrative activities. The chief priest did not hesitate to discuss *śrīcakra* worship which he maintains has continued unbroken over the generations even though there is no lineage established among the priestly families themselves. At present, he asserts, only he performs the *navāvaraṇa* *śrīcakra* *pūjā* on the full and new moon days of each month and no other priests are qualified to perform any more than an *arcana* of the *LSN* or other devotional worship. He was, curiously enough, initiated into the *śrīvidyā* and taught the Śrīvidyā rituals by the guru of the "Ānanda" Mandali though he is not himself a member of the group. While the "Ānanda"

lineage (here distinguished from the organization of the Mandali) theoretically accepts the use of the *pañcamakāras* and other Kaula influenced Tantric rituals, these "unacceptable" activities are omitted from the worship of the cakra within the temple.

It is the association of the Śaṅkara tradition with the temple and the cakra that is most puzzling if only because of the absence of any claim to the continuity of a Śaṅkara-instituted lineage regarding the worship of either the image or the *śrīcakra*.[6] Instead there is only an oral tradition associating Saṅkara with the installation of the *śrīcakra* and the involvement of the present Śaṅkarācārya with certain rituals performed on the temple grounds. The priest explained the tradition of worshipping the *srīcakra* within the temple as he understood it:

> The ordinary *pūjās* to the goddess are performed with the door to the sanctum left open, though at appropriate times such as dressing the deity, the curtain is pulled. With the *śrīcakra*, however, the door is closed and the *pūjā* is performed in private. This is the temple tradition from ancient times. There is no one else to perform the *pūjā* and I try to do it regularly [but don't always]...We believe that there has been continuous worship here of the *śrīcakra* since the time of Śaṅkara and perhaps before.[7]

If the priest's account is trustworthy then it is clear that the individuals responsible initially for the inclusion

of the sricakra within Kāmākṣī's shrine still maintained that its worship was, in its essential form, secret and not meant to be a public observance. Though the priest emphasized that no "objectionable" activities went on behind closed doors, he was unable to explain why the pūjā was kept secret or, at least, entirely private. There does not appear to be an oral tradition explaining either the presence or the precise manner of śrīcakra worship within the Kāmākṣī temple though there are clearly defined prescriptions concerning certain aspects of the form of worship, such as its being performed with only the priest present and its not including Kaula elements such as the pañcamakāras. If ever there was an established tradition of worship, as some adepts not directly associated with the temple maintain, then it has not survived within the families of the hereditary priests.[8]

Certainly the Śrīvidyā votaries originally involved in instituting the worship of the śrīcakra within the temple succeeded in bringing it into the more open and public setting of the temple without sacrificing specific elements of traditional secrecy. Leaving aside historical caste restrictions regarding entrance into the temple premises, the effect of the presence of the śrīcakra before Kāmākṣī has been to establish it popularly as part of her personality and yet retain an esoteric association that is

neither discussed nor considered except by those relatively few Śrīvidyā adepts who visit the temple or have a knowledge of it. The result has been twofold: (1) There is a distinct lack of attention paid to the śrīcakra which appears to diminish its importance both in the eyes of devotees and the priests and yet (2) the cakra maintains an aura of power especially for Śrīvidyā adepts concerned with its interpretation in a public setting. Certainly the tradition of a "closed door pūjā" has added to the mystique of the śrīcakra but it has not served to increase its popularity. According to one adept who frequently visits the temple, this is one of the aims of its public worship.

> The benefits of the śrīcakra worship are distributed to all who come into contact with it in the temple. But there is an important distinction between those who are qualified only to worship it in the ordinary way [public] and those who can perform the ritual (pūjā) [privately]. In this case there is a further restriction on the qualification (adhikāra) of the worshipper because the pūjā can only be done by one of the hereditary priests who is also a Srīvidyā worshipper. But the result is that the benefits of the worship are distributed without involving the uninitiated in types of religious practice for which they have no qualification. This protects them and leads to no further confusion: the cakra is simply a part of the temple tradition and most people do not think about it any more deeply than that. It is fair to say that many know that the śrīcakra and Devī are related but not many know anything about its [i.e., the cakra's] significance, or even ask about it. What is secret or open, they do not consider, even adepts who do not ordinarily [maintain a] practice at all in public accept the srīcakra as part of the temple tradition. There is no [sic] contradiction for them just as there

> is no confusion for the uninitiated person who sees the śrīcakra first with Kāmākṣī and then with some other goddess...They simply accept it.[9]

The final remark of this passage ("They simply accept it.") can be easily overlooked but is important for our appreciation of the complexities of Hindu attitudes toward worship and imagery. The prevailing sentiment in many instances in which seemingly contradictory or conflicting evidence is presented is "acceptance". Even more intellectually oriented adepts often let paradoxes stand without pursuing strict theological consistency or interpretive formulation. In this case, one finds a remarkable lack of interest on the part of worshippers to question the relationship between the physical image of the goddess and the śrīcakra: the vast majority simply accept that there is some reason or relationship that, in effect, does not concern their own worship. Many realize that there are individuals who do know about such matters and this knowledge confers on them a certain elevated status, but for the majority of the non-initiates there is little concern for the such details.

Even in the case of those directly involved and, to some degree, knowledgeable about the temple's traditions a comparable situation occurs. The chief priest, for example, maintains that there is an historical relationship between Sankara and the presence of the śrīcakra before Kāmākṣī and

a continuing influence from the Śaṅkara maṭha, but does not see any inconsistency in his own relationship to this tradition. Having been initiated by a guru with no formal relationship to the temple and one that accepts concepts and practices that are theoretically anathema to established temple orthodoxy (such as the use of the pañcamakāras), the priest sees no conflict of interest or conceptual inconsistency with regard to his own practice and interpretations. Both the Śaṅkara based tradition and the tradition of his own initiation, are kept side by side though they apparently conflict on theoretical and practical issues. The priest is not unaware that there are differences of opinion on certain doctrinal and practical matters but chooses to let them stand as part of the whole tradition. What is deemed acceptable in one context of Śrīvidyā worship is considered inappropriate in another--- there is no effort to raise the question of which is "true". The priest saw his first duty as that of a priest of the Kāmākṣī temple; being a Śrīvidyā adept was to him an added indication of his special relationship to the goddess.[10]

One certainly cannot conclude that such attitudes reflect confused or naive minds; that the present situation appears to parallel historical attitudes, however, offers a key to our developing understanding. Hindus at all levels of theological sophistication live with paradoxes rather

than in spite of them, whether they be a part of the visual imagery, intellectual argument or ritual practice. Paradoxes are, as it were, as elements of faith rather than inconsistencies or obstacles in its development. Śrīvidyā adepts share in this ethos of paradoxical belief; what an outsider might deem contradictory or as impugning the consistency of the theology, the pious devotee often accepts as part of a larger mosaic pattern that is as mysterious as it is beyond the limits of reason.

This is not to suggest that Hindus are not as convinced of the absoulte veracity of their own particular beliefs as are members of any other faith, but that there is a far more deliberate effort to let seemingly contradictory concepts stand as part of the multifariousness of a tradition that finds resolution in individual faith. This situation is nowhere more apparent than among the highly individualized teachings of Tantras in which gurus instruct disciples of a single lineage into practices that, at face value, are blatantly opposed.

The observations of Wendy O'Flaherty, whose work on the seeming contradictions surrounding the figure of Śiva, are particularly relevant to a discussion of Śākta Tantrism. She observes:

> ...one must avoid seeing a contradiction or paradox where the Hindu sees an opposition in the Indian sense---correlative opposites that act as interchangeable identities in essential

> relationships. The contrast between the erotic and ascetic tradition in the character and mythology of Siva is not the kind of °conjunction of opposites' with which it has so often been confused. Tapas (asceticism) and kāma (desire) are not diametrically opposed like black and white, or heat and cold, where the complete presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other....This tendency to increase rather than minimize the distance between conflicting ideas is basic to Indian thought.[11]

O'Flaherty offers a resolution of these paradoxes through various avenues of interpretation, particularly relying on the psychological value of mythology and the "irrational solution" of loving devotion (bhakti). While her account focuses on a different set of materials than those considered here, her insights are no less applicable. Within Śrīvidyā tradition the presence of secret elements of tradition in public settings can be explained similarly: seemingly antithetical or unrelated values and concepts (viz., secrecy and openness) are brought together in a common context and yet are left intact as part of a larger theological and mythical pattern. The instances cited in the present study are a microcosm of a matrix of values that permeates Hindu theology.

The relationship of the Śānkara matha in Kāñcipuram to the Kāmākṣī Temple worship of the śrīcakra (and the cakra's public worship elsewhere in Tamil Nāḍu) is also noteworthy for the seeming historical and doctrinal paradoxes involved. According to the chief priest of the Kāmākṣī temple, the

present Śaṅkarācārya, like those before him, secretly practices the *śrīcakra pūjā* within the *maṭha* as part of his daily devotions. Though he does not perform any such rituals in public or within the Kāmākṣī temple, it is a common belief not only among temple priests but among Śrīvidyā adepts that the Śaṅkarācārya is intimately involved with Śrīvidyā. The Śaṅkarācārya himself declined to elaborate on his own private practices but he was very clear on the matter of the traditional ascription of Śrīvidyā works such as *SL* and *LTSB* to the historical Śaṅkara (i.e., the *Ādisankara*).

While the matter of his personal involvement is ambivalent, there can be little doubt that the Śaṅkarācārya openly supports and encourages ritual performances, publications and other activities of Srīvidyā adepts. He has on several occasions authorized Srīvidyā rituals, including the construction of a large *meru śrīcakra* within the Kāmākṣī temple's grounds in 1979 to accompany an elaborate *homa*. Several organized Mandalis actively seek his blessings before proceeding with semi-private rituals or publications and make special public note of his official sanction. Though it is difficult to assess all the motivations behind such actions, the effect is to legitimize and sanction Śrīvidyā in the public eye and hence disassociate it from other "Tantric" sects. Groups

dominated by *smārta* Brahmins gain a certain degree of status by having themselves associated with the Śaṅkarācārya and the traditions of the *maṭha*. Furthermore, by aligning themselves with the "orthodox" Śaṅkara traditions adepts are "sanitized" of "Tantric" influences and gain a kind of historical legitimacy.

At the popular level of visual associations, the present Śaṅkarācārya in Kāñcipuram, Jayendra Sarasvatī (along with his better known immediate predecessor), is often pictured beside a *śrīcakra*. While he is not as frequently depicted with a *śrīcakra* as he is with an image of the goddess Kāmākṣī, there is a popular association relating him to Kāmākṣī, her temple and the *śrīcakra*. Conversations with the Śaṅkarācārya did not reveal his purported familiarity with Śrīvidyā literature and while it is impossible to confirm the reports of his private practice of Śrīvidyā, the popular belief that he conducts regular *śrīcakra pūjā* would seem unlikely. Unfortunately, the administration of the *maṭha* was not entirely cooperative or informative, though several individuals did maintain privately their own belief that the present Śaṅkarācārya is as personally involved with Śrīvidyā as his predecessors have been since the time of the *Ādiśaṅkara*. Publicly the Śaṅkarācārya performs only Śiva *pūjās* and only obliquely refers to the goddess and her worship. Neither the *maṭha*

authorities nor the Śaṅkarācārya would elaborate further on his involvement with Śrīvidyā except to affirm the *Ādisaṅkara*'s purported authorship of Śrīvidyā works and to extend their support for the activities of various groups and individuals involved with "pure" (i.e., non-Kaula) Śrīvidyā. The link between Śrīvidyā and the Saṅkara *pīṭha* rests primarily on the quasi-historical relationship of the *maṭha* tradition to textual traditions associated with the eighth century Saṅkara.

While the *srīcakra* within the Kamakṣī temple and the temple's relationship with the Saṅkara *pīṭha* are the most explicit public displays of Srividyā in Tamil Naḍu, the origin of the temple's imagery and the Saṅkara tradition's relationship to Srividyā remain obscure. One is led to conclude that both institutions have undergone significant developments despite claims of continuity with the ancient tradition. Śrīvidyā votaries frequently resort to explanations involving traditional secrecy to account for these discrepancies; historical accuracy remains a secondary consideration when viewed against the Śrīvidyā's self-understanding of its history and practices. For the Śrīvidyā adept maintaining a pious devotion to the traditions of Śāṅkara and the worship of the *śrīcakra* within the Kāmākṣī temple, the "truth" depends largely on an interpretation of theological traditions rather than on a

critical appraisal of history.

While the origins of Śrīvidyā worship in Kāñcipuram are historically obscure, at the temple of Naṭaraja in Cidambaram there are important clues suggesting the appearance of the śrīcakra from perhaps as early as the seventh century, C.E. References by the Tamil siddha Tirumūlar have been discussed above in Part One; of concern here is the specific mention of the śrīcakra in the works of the thirteenth century figure, Umāpatiśivācārya. Umāpati must be considered particularly authoritative regarding the traditions of the Naṭarāja temple since he was himself a member of the priestly clan that has controlled its religious and administrative affairs, the so-called Three Thousand of Cidambaram (in Tamil, thillai mōvayiravar). He therefore had access to the temple's most restricted areas (such as the inner sanctums of the shrines) and, as a matter of birthright, received initiation into the rites and mantras associated with the temple's deities. Though best known as a proponent of the predominantly south Indian Saiva Siddhānta tradition, Umāpati was a gifted poet as well as a theologian and temple priest. His Kuñcitāṅghristava, the 315 verses eloquently extolling the glories of the dancing Śiva, brings Śrīvidyā directly into the discussion of

Naṭarāja's worship. Other than his mention of the cakra, the śrīvidyā and the beneficent goddess in this particular work, there is no indication that Umāpati had any further involvement with Śrīvidyā tradition. Only one known lineage (the "Guru" Mandali profiled above) has had even a tangential link to the temple and its forms of worship.[12] Bhāskararāya mentions the temple and, specifically, the consort of Naṭarāja, Śivakāmasundarī, but offers no further elaboration on the roles each play in the practice of Śrīvidyā in Cidambaram.[13]

Internal literary evidence in the Kuñcitāṅghristava provides the most compelling association of the śrīcakra and the cidākāsarahasya, that is, the yantra of Naṭarāja better known as the Cidambaram rahasya (or "secret of Cidambaram") or the sammelanacakra. Popular lore attesting that this yantra is a combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras is reiterated by Umāpati.

Verse Twenty of the Kuñcitāṅghristava removes any doubt that at least half of the Cidambaram rahasya is the śrīcakra, though it remains unclear precisely what elements of the configuration are present or what constitutes the Śiva portion of the yantra. It says:

> I praise the bent leg [of Naṭarāja] whom [the Dīkṣītar priests] worship each day, sacrificing to that one [i.e., the goddess and Śiva] established in the śrīcakra on the wall [and] to Him within the Śiva cakra, the Lord of Dance, [and] to [His] left [She, his consort, Śivakāmasundarī] who has

> two hands, holds the parrot and is the power of knowledge (jñānaśakti); whom having worshipped the Earth (go), Brahma and others and presenting various types of offerings and bali, have performed the fire sacrifice (homa).[14]

The reference to the cakra being "on the wall" can only refer to the rahasya to the right of the image of Naṭarāja in the so-called kanaka sabha, or "golden sanctum". The yantra is further obscured to the devotee by a metal grate and appears as little more than a dark, flat rectangle bearing spots of golden bilva leaves. The exact configuration of the underlying yantra is not discussed openly by the Dīkṣītars but it is plain from Umāpati's verse that the Śakti portion is, at least in his estimation, the śrīcakra.[15] This reference appears more authoritative than other oral lore surrounding the yantra because Umāpati, by virtue of his access to the sanctum and the temple traditions, would have been in a position to know the configuration precisely and would have had access to a theological interpretation relating it to Naṭarāja. Despite the temple's changing fortunes over the centuries, there appears to be little doubt that the oldest part of the structure and its basic infrastructure have remained intact and are likely to date from as early as the sixth century. Umāpati appears to confirm what Tirumūlar only suggested in his Tirumantiram: the sammelanacakra, the "secret" form of Naṭarāja considered his most transcendent and esoteric

aspect, is partially, or properly speaking, half consisting of the śrīcakra. A member of the "Guru" Mandali offers a further clarification:

> The śrīcakra portion of the sammelanacakra consists only of the inner parts [of the yantra], that is, from the [fourteen minor triangles] of the manvaśracakra to the bindu. This I have come to know [through siddhi] and by questioning the priests that I am personally very close to. It lacks the outer lotus petals and the bhūpura. This leads us to believe that this portion [i.e., the interlacing triangles] is the origin form of the śrīcakra since it is part of the Naṭarāja rahasya from at least the sixth century. It may very well be much older than that. The Śiva portion of the yantra and how it fits together with the śrīcakra is unclear to me as yet, but Umāpati seems to say that there is very definitely another part, that the śrīcakra itself is not the combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras alone.[16]

Umāpati's remarks, generally confirming this contemporary adept's views, lead one to believe that elements of Śrīvidyā in an established, orthodox temple setting date from at least the sixth century. Even if one relies on only Umāpati's references, excluding the suggestive remarks of Tirumūlar, there can be no doubt that Śrīvidyā had come, at least in a private and secretive way, into the heart of the southern Śaiva temple cult no later than the thirteenth century.[17] The actual worship of the śrīcakra appears to have been subsumed into the worship of the rahasya in general and there is no indication that the majority of contemporary priests are familiar with the intricacies of Śrīvidyā pūjās. That Naṭarāja's yantra

includes the *śrīcakra*, however, is historically one of the most remarkable indications of Tantrism's penetration into public and established orthodox centers before the period of its formal Samaya interpretions.

Verse 110 of *Kuñcitāṅghristava* includes a description of the familiar *śrīcakra* including reference to the two sets of lotus petals and the surrounding three circles.[18] This neither matches the opinion of the adept cited above nor does not it conform fully to a *śrīcakra* that appears beside the sub-shrine of Sivakāmasundarī. In deference to the adept's opinion, the verse merely says that the goddess who sits upon Naṭarāja's lap is situated in the cakra, not that the cakra is part of the *rahasya*, as is clear from verse twenty.

The *srīcakra* beside the Śivakāmasundarī temple is set apart from the central part of this sub-shrine (and away from the inner portion of the temple that includes Naṭarāja and the original sanctum containing a *śivaliṅga*). It recently has been transformed into a stone relief from a painting. The sub-shrine *śrīcakra*'s most important feature is the absence of the *vṛttatraya*. It thus appears to conform to the description of Bhāskararāya and the so-called Hayagrīva Sampradāya. Though the stone configuration is very recent, temple priests say this permanent fixture merely reflects the continued presence of the original

painting which they claim goes back to the earliest expansion of the temple. While it is difficult to assess precisely how old this portion of the temple is and virtually impossible to verify the priest's statements, certainly the identification of Naṭarāja's consort, Śivakāmasundarī, with the śrīcakra is beyond dispute from at least the time of Umāpati. How and why this association was originally conceived is not clear though its occurance confirms one of the most fundamental conclusions of this thesis: Śrīvidyā was known, if not developed, by upper caste, predominantly Brahmin, intellectuals not averse to certain elements of Tantrism (such as the worship of yantras, etc.). These high caste votaries brought their private practices into the mainstreams of public worship without effectively sacrificing the secrecy of the tradition. They incorporated elements such as the śrīcakra but did little to popularize its esoteric meanings or rituals.

In the case of the Naṭarāja temple, there is no reason to believe that the Dīkṣītar priests have maintained any secret tradition of Srīvidyā worship though it is likely that the cakra was initially brought into the temple's tradition because influential individual priests were involved or attracted to Śrīvidyā and because of the cakra's increasingly public recognition as a form of the supreme

Śakti. The temple priests treat Naṭarāja's consort as an aspect of the supreme Śakti even though she is often insignificant in ritual terms and subsumed into his larger personality. As a curious aside, it is noteworthy that adjacent to the newly refurbished śrīcakra in the Śivakāmasundarī sub-shrine has been established a shrine to the historical Śaṅkara that includes his image. When asked about its location, a priest replied that it was only fitting that Śaṅkara should be near the śrīcakra since he is well-known as one its leading proponents.

It may be concluded that even if Śrīvidyā adepts (be they priests or otherwise) were only tangentially responsible for the incorporation of śrīcakra into the iconography of the Naṭarāja temple, their general influence on established orthodoxy was such that the esoteric form of the beneficent Śakti most commonly acknowledged was the śrīcakra. There seems to be little doubt that Śrīvidyā's imagery, if not its theology and forms of worship, had made an imprint on the purveyors of the Śaiva temple cult from at least the thirteenth century, if not much earlier. Since there is no textual prescription, Āgamic or otherwise, for incorporating the śrīcakra into a temple's iconography, the only possible reason for its inclusion is the broad appeal of its imagery and the acceptability of the Śrīvidyā tradition's dominant trends within the historical milieu of

south Indian culture. Had the tradition which created the śrīcakra been viewed as too far beyond the reaches of orthodox acceptance, it seems unlikely that temple authorities would permit the śrīcakra's inclusion no matter how powerful or compelling its imagery might be.

C. Summary Remarks on Public Forms of Śrīvidyā Tradition

The historical transition from private Śrīvidyā to increasingly public practices and the incorporation of elements such as the śrīvidyā, in public settings is obscure in every major Śaiva/Śākta temple in south India. Śrīvidyā, however, has succeeded in influencing the temple's traditions to the extent that normally unsanctioned, unauthorized rituals and images have become part of established worship. It is also unclear if Śrīvidyā adepts were responsible for the initial inclusion of these elements though there are examples, such as with the chief priest in the Kāmākṣī temple, that suggest that initiates have historically played a leading role in the ritual worship of the śrīcakra. Initiate priests may not receive their instruction in Śrīvidyā as part of the temple tradition; and, in fact, it would appear that instruction has continued to follow the patterns of the private tradition.

It seems quite possible that important figures within temple traditions have involved themselves directly with

Śrīvidyā (as the case in the Kāmākṣī and Cidambaram temples indicate) or, at the very least, that "inside" figures have been aware of Śrīvidyā and incorporated its elements by accommodating them to suit particular situations. Only in the case of the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Śrī Laṅka is there any clearly established relationship between Śrīvidyā and the hereditary priests responsible for all temple activities. Since private Śrīvidyā in south India is dominated historically by high-castes, and perhaps exclusively by Brahmins, then ritual or theoretical elements already considered acceptable to the orthodox majority posed no genuine dilemma of potential acceptability in public temple settings. It nevertheless is remarkable that Śrīvidyā, considering its strong ties to Kaula Tantrism and emphasis on secrecy, has had an impact on the imagery, ritual and theological content of public goddess worship.

Throughout Śrīvidyā's history in south India, however, its elements, particularly the śrīcakra, have never become more than a mysterious and esoteric part of the popular ethos surrounding the goddess in her supreme, beneficent manifestations. Though it has moved into public settings that no longer restrict access to secret mantras or exclude the involvement (be it passive or otherwise) of non-initiates, the essential secrecy of Śrīvidyā's elements is maintained. Non-initiates are neither told what they are

worshipping nor are they informed of the meaning and content of the ritual practice. All that is registered at the level of a non-initiate's involvement is that there is some intimate relationship between the *śrīcakra* and the various forms of Śakti in her beneficent (*saumya*) aspect. Initiates offer no public explanations, no lectures or sponsored instruction linked to temple activities other than ordinary published works, many of which are idiosyncratic and few accessible to the common devotee. In effect, practices involving Srīvidyā's traditional elements even when placed in public settings have not strayed far from the limited access that formed part of its original Tantric heritage. Perhaps the most crucial secret element within the tradition, the *śrīvidya*, remains almost entirely restricted to initiates or to a very few curious and literate lay persons. The *śrīcakra*, however, has gained a universal appeal apart from initiated interpretations.

It is possible that the *śrīcakra*'s imagery alone is the key reason for its emergence into public from originally private settings though evidence points more towards a deliberate introduction into public contexts by individuals with roots in both traditional communities, that is, with authority over temples and as Śrīvidyā adepts. The powerful influence of the Śaṅkara tradition, in south India in particular, has undoubtedly reinforced the link between

Śrīvidyà and the communities of Śaivas and smārta Brahmins and has affected the development of temple traditions, as we have observed in both Cidambaram and Kāñcipuram. Unfortunately, the historical relationship between the eighth century figure of Śaṅkara and the modern Śāṅkara tradition is not illumined by its relationship with Śrīvidyà tradition except to the extent that it is possible to affirm that the transition to a Śaiva/Śākta theological base seems complete by no later than the tenth century and that the tradition's relationship to Śrīvidyā remains a crucial factor in its increasing popularity and influence over high caste communities. The Śāṅkara tradition's patronage and historical relationship to Śrīvidyā has been a major reason for its successful assimilation into the popular ethos as part of the visible, exoteric traditions of goddess worship. It would appear that historically a small minority of high caste participants are responsible for introducing esoteric and secret elements of Śākta Tantrism into the mainstreams of Hindu visual imagery and theology.

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1. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

2. One such place exists in Madurai. Here a guru supported by the "Siddha" Mandali and other patrons is entombed beneath a Śiva *linga*. Directly adjacent to this shrine is another containing a *meru śrīcakra*. Both are worshipped regularly by a priest belonging to the "Siddha" Mandali in the employ of the Trust which effectively controls the shrine's activities. Members of the "Siddha" and "Gāyatrī" Mandalis frequent this place of worship and one junior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali is regularly possessed by the soul of the entombed *siddha*. This has put members of both Mandalis in an easy alliance though their Śrīvidyā practices remain distinct and discussion does not seem to involve any theological matters concerning Śrīvidyā ritual. Interest lies directly in the worship of the *śrīcakra* in a manner that both parties can accept since both acknowledge a Kaula heritage but, in fact, follow the conventions of Tamil *smārta* Brahmin society. The *adhisthāna*, as the tomb and place of worship is technically called, draws a large number of followers with little or no knowledge of Śrīvidyā or the worship of the *śrīcakra*. Some revealed that they had come to see the possession and hear the teachings of the *siddha*. (The occurrences of possession are posted in advance and advertised in local newspapers.) The possessed individual made no allusion to Śrīvidyā at the two scheduled events I attended but rather gave sermons on moral fortitude and following one's prescribed Dharma. The *siddha* himself it appears worshipped the *śrīcakra* regularly but gained his reputation not as a Śrīvidyā *upāsaka* *per se* but as a Śaiva ascetic. During the *siddha*'s lifetime he did not apparently initiate into Śrīvidyā and his own lineage and practices remain obscure. When he died, however, another popular *siddha* with a large, well-heeled following took it upon themselves to create this tomb and shrine and endow a Trust for its continued maintenance. The principal patrons in Madurai were members of the "Gāyatrī" and "Siddha" Mandalis who had a personal admiration for the life and work of the *siddha*.

3. An adept belonging to a Madras-based Mandali, January, 1985.

4. On the attitudes and concepts of worship associated with temple images see, Fuller, p.41f., as cited above for an excellent discussion.

5. A member of the "Guru" Mandali who functions as a priest in the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Sri Lanka, from an interview in Madurai, June, 1985.

6. I have chosen not to delve into the recent history of the temple's administration here since this does not seem to offer any clarification regarding the presence and ritual worship of the *srīcakra*.

7. In an interview conducted in the home of the priest in Kāñchipuram, November, 1984.

8. There is one privately published *paddhati* of the *śrīcakra pūjā* which claims to be the practice within the *Kāmākṣī* temple as it was prescribed according to Śaṅkara. This *paddhati* claims to follow the Samaya interpretation though lacks the detailed differences that Laksmidhara uses to characterize that tradition (such as the inversion of the *śrīcakra* for worship). It is particularly interesting that the editors of this manuscript claim it to be the Śrīvidyā teaching of the sage Durvāsa, one of the twelve gurus of the tradition, but not one traditionally important in other lineages. The chief priest noted that he was familiar with the editor of the *paddhati* and that the work had received the blessings of the Śaṅkarācārya but that he did not believe it reflected the actual traditions of the temple since he himself had been responsible for the worship there for at least the past twenty-five years.

9. A Madras-based Śrīvidyā adept belonging to a lineage not profiled, from a series of interviews conducted in Madras, January, 1985.

10. Bhāskararāya, in a comparable way to the priest's resolution of the temple tradition with his own guru's instructions, praises Śaṅkara, calling him the "Blessed One" and frequently cites him as an interpretive authority. Yet in other passages he proceeds to condemn Śaṅkara's views (notably the reality of the conventional world and the meaning of the term *māyā*) and distinguishes the "Śākta" view from that of the "*kevalādvaitins*". See the *Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya* as an example of this tendency.

11. O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, *Śiva The Erotic Ascetic*. Oxford University Press: New York, 1981, p.35 and p.37.

12. One senior member of the "Guru" Mandali having been raised in the city of Cidambaram and having received initiation before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti within the Naṭarāja temple, has developed a particularly strong relationship with a family of traditional priests. In addition, the image of Naṭarāja and the *mantraśāstra* passed within the temple has so deeply influenced his Śrīvidyā practices that the root mantra (*mūlamantra*) of Naṭarāja is

appended to the *śrīvidyā*. This is the only occasion in which I have found other mantras deliberately appended to the *śrīvidyā* and considered a part of its "larger" form. The adept explains his practice by referring to the relationship between Naṭarāja and the *śrīcakra*.

He remarked: "Since the *śrīcakra* is part of the *rahasya* [i.e., Naṭarāja's yantra] it is only appropriate that there is a relationship between the *śrīvidyā* and the mantra of Lord Naṭarāja."

13. Cf., *LSN*, n.734, Sastry, p.288.

14. **bhittau śrīcakrasaṃstham tadānunatapatiṃ śaivacakrantarastham, tadvame yugmahastamapi ca sukakaram jñānaśaktiñca yasthva/ gobrahmādināthesthva sakalāvidhacāruṇārpayitvā bālimstan, homam krtvā yajanti pratidīnamapi yaṃ kuñcitāṅghrim bhaje'ham//** See *Sri Kuñcitāṅghristavah Śrimadupāmatiśivapraṇitah*, ed., Brahmasrī Ka. Mi. Rajakaneca Tīksitar. Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India: Śrī Naṭarāja Vityasapai, 1958, p.9. All further references are to this edition.

15. The suggestion that *śrīcakra* here refers to any or another "cakra of Śrī", the *goddess* and not specifically the *śrīcakra* has not won any support among contemporary adepts. Considering Umāpati's late date it would seem unlikely that he would use a term with such a specific sense to indicate a cakra other than the well-known *śrīcakra*.

16. "Naṭarāja" in an interview conducted in Cidambaram, December, 1984.

17. For other references to Srividya in the *Kuñcitāṅghristava* see verses 60, 101, 109, 110 and 207 and below.

18. The verse reads: **traicatvārīṃśadaśre vasunṛpākamāle vṛttabhūcakramadhye, bindau sāntānakalpadrumaṇikārayute ratnasaudhemanojñe/ brahmādyākārapade śivamayaphalakeśvarṇamañce niṣpanno, devyāyaḥ pujyate taṃ harimukhavibudhau kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'haṃ//** (See p.51, edition cited above)

Conclusion

A. The Methodological Problem of Studying Other Faiths

While there are several issues worth further consideration, none seems more germane to the present study than understanding the relationship between Śrīvidyā's historical religious tradition and its living legacy. As it has been observed, understanding historical Tantric sources depends largely on the interpretations of living practitioners. Textual and historical studies without oral interpretations will not uncover the Tantras' elliptical meanings. But one might argue as well that focusing on living practitioners' interpretations or their practices is also not enough. In an esoteric tradition which by definition draws its conclusions from "practical applications" that do not admit access for everyone, even understanding what is said about texts, history, theology or practice becomes problematic to the "outside" observer. Perhaps the scholarly endeavor too must extend beyond its traditional boundaries and accept that the study of "religion" will not come to the heart of the issue, that is, that studying Tantrics' interpretations will not be sufficient for understanding Tantric tradition. The historian of religion that collects textual, historical and practical interpretations in order to understand Tantrism

will still be left on the "outside" and therefore will not appreciate, and perhaps not understand, Tantric tradition or rather the meaning of the term "tradition" as traditionalists do.

A possible solution to the dilemma centers on two considerations. The first consideration is necessary for all further points of reflection: in order to understand Tantric tradition historically and as it exists as a living faith, the historian of religion must not undertake to study the tradition per se but its practitioners. Put differently, one must not focus study only on Tantrism but on Tantrics. However concerned one is with correct and consistent data, Tantrism remains obscure if its human dimensions are neglected or sublated in favor of historical "facts". A successful enquiry into Tantrism depends upon understanding Tantrics as religious persons and considering the broader picture of the life and circumstances of particular Tantric practitioners. One must not only gain access to Tantric interpretations but locate them in the lives of adepts who represent its historical legacy. (Gaining access to these interpretations and individuals is central to the second consideration.) As soon as one abstracts and separates interpretations of text, history or practice from the complete personality of its particular living source, one considers the "tradition" as no adept

understands it; that is, as an entity apart from its practical expressions. Such human-centered historical studies may demand regional contexts (in order to address issues within the specific cultural setting) and depend upon extraordinary circumstances (such as developing relationships with sufficient numbers of practitioners in order to complete "representative" studies), but if the goal is to develop an understanding of the Tantric "tradition" then the historian's first task is to understand the concept of "tradition" as Tantrics do. A concept of Tantric "tradition" cannot be limited to what Tantrics' assert are their central tenets and practices, but must include every aspect of life. Thus the historian must also take on the roles of anthropologist and perhaps even psychologist if he or she is to evaluate Tantrism's religious history. To do less would be to lose sight of the complex relationship between human personalities and history that has always been the central ingredient of Tantric tradition. While the historian uses sources other than those of Tantric adepts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of "tradition" (such as temple records, epigraphy and "outside" textual sources), only when historical studies are augmented to include input from living adepts can facts and interpretations be more fully understood.

As an esoteric tradition demanding initiation and privileged access, Śrīvidyā presents a more basic methodological issue to the historian religions. Stated most succinctly, how is it possible for non-participants to understand even in general terms the elements of a faith that insiders insist can only be understood at the level of personal experience? Put differently, can any study of a self-defined esoteric faith actually convey what is a matter of direct involvement for those to whom it is an all-encompassing way of life demanding special qualifications to understand?

The present study also can not ignore another consideration when responding to these issues, that is, the author's own involvement in the tradition under consideration. As an initiate of the tradition, there is a necessary theological dimension to this study's analysis: to what extent are interpretations dependent upon and conditioned by my own personal involvement?[1] Since Tantric traditions by definition demand an "insider's" knowledge for even superficial understanding, my own involvement provides access to the otherwise restricted views of other adepts.

Adepts feel not only privilege in their initiated status but, for many, a sense of responsibility to respond to the demands this initiation entails. While many view themselves at the pinnacle of religious possibilities, many

also suggest a calling to go beyond their own personal religious aims. In this respect, Śrīvidyā tradition is not merely a secret, privately oriented Tantric sādhana but includes self-imposed injunctions to reach beyond the parameters of the lineage even when it is not in the capacity of an initiate. Tradition demands that the Śrīvidyā adept act for others because he or she is an adept, but not that these actions should propagate or directly involve the intricacies of the spiritual discipline. Some initiates, of course, do not interpret the task with a sense of public responsibility, as observed in the Profiles.

It is significant, however, that Śrīvidyā adepts have not restrained self-criticism as they have when confronting other traditions. Śrīvidyā sources say remarkably little about other groups or philosophical/theological positions. Within the tradition there is a remarkable degree of internal debate and discussion and yet only a few instances of condescension or vilification of other opinions: superiority is asserted but not usually at the expense of others while, at the same time, internal self criticism is an accepted practice within the established structures of authority.

Śrīvidyā adepts, however, clearly distinguish the purely intellectual understanding of the tradition from its experience. While many have contempt for the former, few

impugn the integrity of other adepts who claim access to the latter. Even when adepts are in profound disagreement, personal experience is rarely subjected to the same caustic critiques as doctrinal or practical interpretations. The emphasis on the primacy of individual experiences has fostered a respect for the accounts of other adepts.

The basic methodological dilemma posed here is common to all religious traditions: can any observer of religious life know what lies at the heart of a tradition that he or she does not practice? In this case we have noted the added component of "privileged access" and, as we have seen within the south Indian temples, public, non-initiated levels of involvement and understanding do, in fact, remain limited in deference to the fundamental secrecy of Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage.[2]

Literary studies may be fruitful beginnings to further investigations but within Tantric traditions the results of these efforts can rarely be deemed conclusive. Oral traditions do not simply augment the meaning of texts, they sometimes provide the only avenue for obtaining any understanding. Purely literary investigation also does not necessarily address the actual practice and interpretation of the faith. In order to produce even accurate descriptions of the practices and theological interpretations of an esoteric tradition, an examination

must include oral sources from within the living tradition and direct observations of actual practices.

This leads to the second consideration for resolving the dilemma of studying Tantrism. As a matter of necessity this means that the scholar must in some manner gain access to trustworthy and authentic sources; access is itself limited to those who have become personally involved and have gained the trust of others similarly committed. The results of such studies "from the insider's perspective" may have inherent liabilities (such as the verifiability of privately acquired information as well as the fact that materials are inevitably "filtered through" the interpretations and experiences of the adept/scholar) but such studies, I would suggest, are perhaps the only legitimate avenue for gaining insight into esoteric traditions such as Hindu Tantrism. Actual historical practices will remain forever obscure unless one obtains first hand accounts that somehow address the discrepancy between what is "said" or "written" and what is actually "done". What we know about living Tantric tradition is perhaps the only bridge from extant written sources to past practices and interpretations based on them. If understanding Tantrism entails direct and personal experience or knowledge within traditions that by definition are inaccessible to non-initiates, then perhaps the only

situation available for scholarship is to observe and record the reflections of Tantrics. Determining the "authenticity" of accounts and interpretations is, to a large degree, defined not only by the scholar's historical and literary knowledge but by his or her personal understanding of the tradition. It is possible that studies of living Tantric traditions can be successful only if initiates conduct the research and take responsibility for divulging the "secret" interpretations of others. Without the scholar-adept's "subjective" insights living interpretations or observed practices cannot be "objectively" understood even superficially; it is not enough to focus on what Tantrics say and do since without some comparable experience from within the tradition recorded interpretations are often impenetrable, obscure or seemingly disjointed.

A scholarly treatment of materials acquired by "privileged access" certainly demands some type of accountability. It is clear, however, that even if sources were traced to their origins, non-initiates attempting to verify or gain similar access to accounts within a tradition might not obtain satisfactory responses. Adepts may not entrust personal accounts---even those on the purely intellectual level of theology---to "outsiders". The credibility of such "insider's studies" obviously depends to a large extent on scholarly integrity and on the training of

the adept in the methods of historical scholarship.[3] If studying with Tantrics is insufficient to penetrate hermeneutical barriers and participation in a tradition is intellectually suspect, then the scholarly enterprise, were it not so important for understanding the history of Indian religions, might be abandoned.

However "distant" the Tantric tradition remains to non-initiates (if even for understanding its historical manifestations one must rely on adepts for accounts of others willing to discuss it), it is possible to come to some understanding of its theologies and practices. Theologians of Western traditions have long argued that a complete understanding of their respective faiths entails participation for both the theologian and the student; that Tantrics should argue similarly is hardly surprising.

B. Oral Tradition and the Impact of Print Technology

Jack Goody, in his analysis of the affects of changing modes of communication on the thought of pre-literate societies, has argued convincingly that advancing technologies have had a profound influence on the development of oral and written traditions.[4] While Goody's discussion focuses on cultures in which literacy is a recent or newly developing situation, the implications of his study are a fruitful source for further consideration of oral

tradition within Śrīvidyā and especially for enriching understanding of the relationship between oral and written modes of transmission.

Unlike Goody's case studies of Africa in which literacy and the impact of the printed word are relatively recent elements affecting a new response to traditionally oral materials, the Śākta Tantras in India present a rather different set of circumstances and a situation that has little in common with pre-literate societies or modes of thought. The Tantras emerged in a society with sophisticated literary traditions intact. Thus while Tantrics did not lack the means to convey tradition in written forms they chose deliberately to maintain texts and interpretations in solely oral forms of transmission for centuries before committing to written modes of expression. Goody's central contribution, however, remains relevant to an understanding of the development of oral tradition and the concept of scripture within Tantrism precisely because it addresses the roles of the changing modes of presentation of materials and emphasizes technological innovation as a major contributing factor affecting the transmission of tradition. While Goody does not contribute to an understanding of why Tantrics made the initial shift from purely oral to written transmission---an issue that may never be satisfactorily resolved at an historical level---

his work is useful for a deeper appreciation of more recent events. It is clear that the transition to printed sources represents another stage in the development of Śrīvidyā tradition in addition to the earlier transition from oral to written modes of transmission. In the case of the shift to printed materials, the affects on oral tradition are less obscure than the rather speculative reasons proposed for the initial move from purely oral to written transmissions.

The essence of Goody's thesis is that the presentation of materials in written and printed forms from preexisting oral forms fundamentally changes the ways in which they can be and actually are considered: stated differently, the shift from purely oral modes to written or printed modes profoundly affects the attitudes of participants and influences their understanding of what is presented. In Śrīvidyā the shift to print from written sources represents a distinct phase in the understanding of "tradition" by adepts.

Goody's position is at least self-evidently true when viewed in light of the material already discussed. But before considering its further implications it is necessary to reflect briefly on the types of oral "tradition" that have developed within Śrīvidyā's lineages and, in the process, to appreciate what Śrīvidyā adepts understand by "oral" transmission and precisely what can be viewed as

"tradition".

Śrīvidyā's "oral" tradition can be defined as any verbal transmission, be it instruction, explanation or exegesis, in which the adept creates some link (stated or implicit) with the past. Thus at the first level of interpretation, an oral tradition is simply whatever an adherent maintains verbally as part of the legacy or interpretation of his or her faith even when it is not acknowledged by others. Historical or social factors, especially when considered in each individual's situation, may be important for determining a particular oral transmission's origins and deciphering its content but such factors may not be central to an adept's interpretation. Without self-conscious reflection or a deliberate effort to assume historical continuity, some oral materials are passed as "traditional" teachings because they relate individual experiences and are formulated out of a personal understanding of what constitutes "tradition". It would appear that the first level of the "traditional" in any oral presentation must refer to individual experiences and reflections draw from personal faith; no oral transmission achieves authenticity without the adherent acknowledging his or her own personal involvement with the tradition. This is the case even when the experience, interpretation or event is considered by the individual as beyond complete

understanding or verbal articulation.

During the present research it became evident that oral "tradition" could be interpreted to mean any attempt on the part of an adept to convey personal experiences; or more precisely, experiences not viewed apart from the adept's sense of historical continuity but neither considered as emerging in direct causal relationships to these conditions.

Thus the first meaning of oral tradition is any adept's verbal transmission relating a personal experience and founded in the adept's understanding of the historical transmission of his or her lineage's teachings. These are part of an "internal" oral tradition, namely, that which is developed and passed within particular lineages. Yet this internal oral tradition is not immune to external influences, such as the oral and written lore surrounding teachings and practices of the tradition in pan-Indian and regional settings. But neither, from the adept's perspective, is internal oral tradition utterly dependent upon historically documented materials.

Individually developed interpretations must be considered "valid" contributions to "tradition" not only when assessed in light of historical or theological criteria, but quite apart from these more "objective" factors. An adept's "authenticity" either personally or professionally acknowledged by teachers, students, peers or

others, defines a particular oral transmission as "traditional". Such an individualized concept of the "tradition" is derived from the status attributed to a Tantric guru or any "realized" adept. An adept's authority, rooted in the concept of being a living embodiment of the divine, means that each individual's understanding of tradition and personal experience constitutes "tradition" at least within the adept's lineage.

At another level internal oral "tradition" refers to a verbal transmission that interprets a source (or sources) beyond an individual adept's personal experiences or "creative understanding". This includes teachings received from a guru or other adepts within a given lineage as well as the transmitted interpretation of sources contributing to the lineage's tradition. A lineage's guru, whether historical or contemporary, defines teachings as "traditional" since his or her absolute authority within the lineage insures that verbally transmitted experiences (or interpretations of experiences) remain a part of the oral tradition. But a guru frequently draws upon a number of "external" sources beyond personal experiences, including scriptures (actually studied or otherwise identified), oral lore received or merely "heard" and other forms (or imagined forms) of practice. Thus orally maintained materials are considered "traditional" also when they exist in

transmissions with clearly identifiable historical relations. Gurus may not articulate the complex influences that affect their understanding of tradition, but they always make a point of locating themselves within an "historical" lineage.

Thus oral "tradition" necessarily extends beyond personalized perspectives insofar as it reflects currents, ideas or practices with historical or quasi-historical precedents. When a concept is documented in historical sources there is at least the possibility of comparing its presentation with the interpretations of contemporary oral traditions. The "tradition" is historically continuous when oral transmissions directly respond or are in some way influenced by other less ephemeral modes of communication, such as written or printed sources.

The degree to which oral (or even living) traditions' views "correspond" to written traditions might at first appear a relatively simple task were it not for the special role the oral/aural plays in Hindu Tantrism and, what might best be termed, inherent hermeneutical problems. Few written Tantric sources make much sense without some form of oral commentary or explanation which can only be obtained from a living source. Whether a given commentary is "correct" or even plausible depends on both the individual authenticity of the interpreter and the relationship of

historical continuity that interpreter establishes with the text or concept. While the scholar develops criteria to make these assessments, the Tantric disciple accepts both aspects as facts: the authentic adept (1) has been trained in a continuous tradition of interpretation that grants access to materials otherwise obscure or impenetrable and (2) is a locus of "spiritual authority" by virtue of personal practice. Thus whatever is said by the adept has an authenticity arising out of the adept's own personal practice as it is recognized by others.

It is clear to the observer that a "tradition" exists in the sense of a continuity with the past only when some historical, theoretical or practical relationship is orally established and demonstrated or documented through texts, records, epigraphy or some other form of tangible evidence. Whether a particular interpretation that is transmitted as "tradition" is "correct" depends on the perspective of the person receiving it: the adept within a lineage receiving "traditional" materials accepts "received" interpretations usually at face-value as authentic and essentially "true": only the scholar or a member of another lineage questions the veracity of such transmissions. If there is an immediate relationship between an adept and a guru providing oral transmission then even the most blatant contradictions between text and oral interpretation or between tradition

and history may be overlooked since the guru has an absolute authority over the meaning of scripture and a power to determine what is scriptural or relevant to a particular disciple or lineage. As immediacy in transmission breaks down over a period of generations, documented material or a lineage's practice is once again open to revision. (The issue of "immediacy" of authority has been made elsewhere.)

Thus there are at least two distinct types of internal oral tradition evident in Hindu Tantrism, namely, (1) one that explicitly links itself in some way with the interpretation of historically documented, "external" materials and (2) another that affirms and accepts the creative input of individual participants as direct, "internal" sources of tradition and authority. In the first type there is a self-conscious and deliberate effort to create a relationship with the past, while in the second an ordinary historical relationship, however discernable, is not the primary source of authoritativeness. Thus in personal accounts of adepts--what some may take as "made up" interpretations lacking historical sources of verification--authority originates in the direct experience of the adept and in the perception of others who deem oral transmissions based on these accounts as authentic.

However one chooses to distinguish the two types of oral tradition they are not necessarily represented by two

different elements within Śrīvidyā tradition. While there are gurus incapable of making accurate or even clear historical connections, they may have a significant impact on the development of a lineage tradition. The "sastric knowledge" or the scholastic prowess of a guru is rarely, if ever, a leading criteria for adepts' judgments of authenticity. The emphasis rather is on the guru as an exemplary model of the tradition's virtues and spiritual ideals. The stamp left on a particular interpretation is not meant to be an individual signature (since this would violate the ideal of "egoless" behavior) but because power is vested in individual gurus with strong personal identities, individualized interpretations profoundly affect the content of historical oral traditions. The individual adept who effectively "creates" tradition without known or documented historical precedents obviously has not been exempt from the written and historical tradition's influences. Furthermore, the adept has acquired authority through an initiation that clearly links him to an "historical" lineage with divine origins. Determining the "validity" of an oral tradition becomes problematic only when the observer wishes to distinguish specific interpretations as being of one type or the other, that is, as either essentially personal "creations" or historically continuous views.

By relating these two types of oral communication considered "tradition" to written tradition we are brought back to Goody's central point. Not only does the shift to a "written" tradition affect the transmission of Tantric teachings by abstracting ideas which can (and do) stand apart from ultimately authoritative spoken words, oral interpretations are no less dramatically altered by changing modes of written communication. Once privately distributed and hand copied, written Tantric sources in printed editions have changed not only in form but in content. This shift in mode of transmission resulted not so much from the influence of encroaching science but from increasing social and intellectual pressures on traditional India, and particularly from elements anxious to bring to light India's historical and religious heritage. These influences, some of which must be attributed to foreigners, precipitated the development of manuscript libraries and increasing public accessibility.

As hand copied sources are edited and committed to print they are subject to different sets of criteria for determining content. How a traditional adept edits (and particularly determines interpolations within) a written source as it appears within a lineage may be significantly different than its treatment by a scholar, even when that scholar is an initiate. Thus an adept in the process of

editing a text may alter it to suit the ideology of his lineage while a scholar may develop criteria to determine which manuscript readings represent the most "coherent" and "consistent" versions of the text. A major effect of print technology on Tantric tradition has been the possibility of non-initiates gaining access to previously "secret" information.

As noted earlier, handwritten manuscripts of Tantric sources are increasingly rare in contemporary India as adepts come to depend on the printed word. It is precisely this shift from handwritten to printed texts, a transition of technology accompanied by a more open enquiry into religious and historical traditions, that has contributed most dramatically to changes in the contemporary Srividya tradition's understanding of scripture and the authority of written traditions. Hand copied texts passed within lineages possess authority arising from the guru's personal responsibility for content; an authority that printed texts may lack. "Selective" reading, the process by which adepts choose to include and exclude materials within a single source, arises at least in part from this disassociation of adepts and lineages with a work's printed contents.

When early texts were committed to writing from originally oral forms they retained a direct relationship to the structures of authority within the tradition because

they could not be separated, at least initially, from the people who copied and owned them. This was true so long as the texts passed through the hands of qualified teachers. Teachers did not separate themselves from the content of handwritten works which they at least to some degree controlled. As written texts gradually acquired more established, fixed forms, the interpretive oral tradition still maintained a relationship that provided an effective check on the content if not on the volume or form of a particular text. But with the shift to print technology, texts left the hands of the orally oriented traditionalists initially responsible for their transmission and emerged in forms no longer acceptable to particular lineages. While the printing of secret or private texts did not create the "selective" reading that emerged with established written forms (since this would have occurred anyway on ideological grounds), neither did it create an emerging sense of authority for the printed word. In fact, it seems printed texts have not become more authoritative sources of tradition (as they may be for scholarship) but less authoritative since they abstract material one step further from the most immediate center of authentic authority, that is, from the individual adept interpreters within lineages.

Modern Śrīvidyā adepts have responded to the shift in presentation from handwritten to printed forms by

developing new approaches to the concept of scripture. The usual result is either "acceptance" of only limited portions of a given text or a hierarchical ranking of concepts within sources. But perhaps this increasing abstractness and lessening control over the content of "classical" texts also accounts, at least to some extent, for the greater emphasis contemporary lineages place on their own paddhatis: texts over which they have a complete control and a sense of historical continuity as arbiters of traditional authority.

In whatever form the paddhatis take--handwritten, privately printed or sometimes publicly available--the links between oral and written forms are direct and the source of authority more immediate. Not only have materials other than paddhatis gradually lost influence in contemporary oral traditions as manuscripts are replaced by printed texts but the maintenance of oral interpretations surrounding these materials have become less important. The overall effect is a gradual decline in the standards of instruction within lineage traditions. Committing texts to the more permanent medium of print has not necessarily made it easier for adepts to transmit Śrīvidyā. Rather, historical sources sometimes become more difficult to accept at face-value because they lack the authority of having been passed in accepted lineages and, witn increasing dependence on printed materials, lineages are more dependent on the availability

of printed works. These conditions affect the tradition as economic and intellectual situations dictate what adepts may learn and what sources their lineages preserve.

Śrīvidyā as an oral and written tradition might best be viewed as series of intersecting (but not concentric) circles in which each individual and lineage forms a part of an interlacing series of interpretations. The resulting mosaic is one of diversity within the parameters of an historical tradition very much in a dynamic process of self-understanding and reevaluation. The image is evocative of the śrīcakra itself.

C. Śrīvidyā as a School of Śāktism: Hierarchy and Privilege

Śrīvidyā has usually responded to other forms and traditions of Hindu worship tolerantly. Rather than reject outright other forms of worship as inappropriate or inadequate, Śrīvidyā adepts affirm their own superiority by creating hierarchies of religious possibilities; hierarchies of their own making. The tradition has retained its continuity by interpreting religious experiences and practices as reflections of varying degrees of knowledge and by categorizing and ranking views. This process is centered within lineages though there are historical sources which apparently reflect regional views and present established schemes.[5]

Śrīvidyā, like the other essentially private and initiated Tantric sects, is identified not merely through scriptures or doctrines but through the individuals and lineages that link themselves to its distinctive synthesis of concepts. There are two important considerations for understanding Śrīvidyā both as a Tantric sect and as an historically influential school of Śākta Hinduism: (1) Its continuity and influence is not a product of abstract formulations of doctrine or imagery but rests upon the enduring faith of its adherents; and (2) these adherents have developed its identity not by emphasizing "new" concepts but by fusing elements of existing historical traditions into a unique synthesis. To be sure, certain elements within Śrīvidyā, such as the śrīcakra and śrīvidyā, are uniquely its own though these components too belong to a more general, continuous tradition of yantras and mantras that goes beyond sectarian identities or even specifically Tantric formulations. As we have observed also, individuals may "follow" or "practice" Śrīvidyā without making an exclusive commitment. Such important historical figures as Maheśvarānanda elicit a strong interest in other forms of Tantric discipline (sādhana). Precisely how these individuals "rank" or consider Śrīvidyā in relation to their other interests or practices is not always clear. Contemporary adepts, at least those I encountered in south

India, continue to follow a general pattern: some initiated adepts practice other forms of spiritual discipline in addition to Śrīvidyā and some, but not all, are willing to create an implicit or stated "hierarchy" of theological possibilities.

Regarding the ways in which Śrīvidyā as a school of Tantrism transcends the boundaries distinguishing ancient Vedism from classical Hinduism, we have already observed the role and interpretation of mantras as ritual elements in the salvific process. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, in this way retains or harkens back to features more characteristic of Vedic traditions than other groups belonging to the classical Hinduism. Tantric mantras like Vedic mantras retain magical and almost mechanical qualities; effects result from the mantra's intrinsic value coupled with the empowerment of qualified use. The ritual power of mantras extends over both natural and social events at historical and transhistorical levels. At the same time the role of mantras in the salvific process is deemed crucial. To be initiated into the root mantra (mūlamantra), according to Śrīvidyā tradition, is not merely to acquire a successful means of accomplishing the four aims of life (puruṣārthas) but, in some way, to have already accomplished them. Put differently, the śrīvidyā is not merely knowledge (vidyā) about the key to liberation and worldly prosperity

but in some sense constitutes these aims. For the adept, knowing the mantra (vidyā) is possessing knowledge (vidyā); it is, as it were, a direct channel to the Absolute (brahman) since the mantra is itself the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) of the deity and thus is identical to Brahman.

E. Reason, Liberation and Prosperity

Given the strong emphasis on ritual practice and multivalent symbols (i.e., images, mantras and yantras), at what point in Śrīvidyā tradition is rational enquiry subordinated to the experiences these actions and symbols are meant to provide?

Despite years devoted to developing ritual and theoretical interpretations, Śrīvidyā adepts rely neither upon ritual nor rational, theological understanding per se to gain material and spiritual goals. Neither do they appear particularly interested in describing the process of personalizing these symbols, rituals and rational investigations. Descriptions of final liberation are rare in primary scriptural sources and of secondary importance in the oral transmission of the tradition. The liberative experience is considered a profoundly personal and seemingly unmistakable encounter with Truth. Therefore Śrīvidyā's theologians emphasize the need to perfect the process rather

than explain the content of the final goal. If the process of liberation, including the tradition's elaborate ritual and theological elements, is carried to its conclusion then the goal will not be misconstrued---at least this is the implication of adepts. Thus it is common also to find Śrīvidyā adepts with little interest in the intricacies of theology or ritual symbolism, preferring to concentrate on ritual or meditative practice itself.

One of the consequences of this self-fulfilling interpretation of liberation has been that ritual performance and symbolic content lead many adepts to concentrate almost exclusively on these elements. Ritual and theological speculation appear to become ends in themselves when, in fact, the majority within the tradition condemn such interpretations. While ritual practices are not viewed as solely responsible for spiritual realization neither can they be considered utterly distinct "means" disassociated from an "end". To view ritual as merely a "means" would be to separate it or consider it "different" than the goal: this position too must be unacceptable in a theology whose stated goal is to dissolve the differences between ordinary existence and Absolute reality. All forms of symbolism, ritual and practice are intended to lead the conclusion that the very process of discrimination dissolves distinctions, including those involving "means" and "ends"

disappear. However paradoxical the method may seem, the purpose of creating an elaborate network of symbols is to transcend the appearance of differences.

For the majority of Śrīvidyā adepts the performance of the Śrīcakra pūjā, sometimes after years of extensive instruction into its meanings, is not an exercise preoccupied with unravelling symbolism. As one adept succinctly put it:

> I am not thinking of all the meanings of the cakra when I meditate upon it, or all the meanings of the mantra when I repeat it. It is not an intellectual experience but a spiritual one---but neither do the intellectual aspects of the discipline completely cease when the pūjā begins... learning and ritual practices are what lead us to a more complete understanding... it is like sowing [rice] paddy: the ground has been turned, the seedlings planted and nurtured by the rains and now the sun's light begins to take its effect.[6]

For the adept, simply to practice the ritual is in some way to attain its aims while the whole spiritual practice is itself rooted deeply in traditions of symbolic interpretation, regimented habit and a belief in gradual realization.

F. Initiation and Faith

As part of the Tantric tradition, the central defining

act of commitment to Śrīvidyā is initiation (dīkṣā). This commitment is not merely a matter of submitting to certain structures of authority or accepting certain beliefs, it is an act of faith, an act of the heart and mind.[7]

Formal initiation makes demands on the individual to adhere to certain structured norms of behavior and to accept certain patterns of authority. But dīkṣā also represents the opening of new possibilities: initiation is not intended to bind the adept but to serve as the first creative act of a life transformed by religious commitment. The guru is, of course, the key figure in this process and continues to act as the guiding force behind the adept's discipline even when physically absent. Initiation is the first act of commitment to a spiritual discipline that implies sacrifice, the relinquishing of lower aims for higher ones, and a submission and obedience intended to foster greater personal growth and stability. Thus initiation is not a single, isolated ritual but an event the adept carries through life; it effects the transition from mundane to spiritual life as every form of action becomes motivated by a sense of religious purpose. The adept no longer lives simply for himself, his family or his community but as a spiritually endowed person with a broader, albeit a sometimes "secret", social responsibility. By initiation and commitment to Srividya the adept believes he has gained access to the very

substance of divinity in the forms of mantra and yantra. This theological position necessarily implies social and ethical values and sometimes has unfortunate consequences. For example, unequivocal reliance on the guru has led some adepts to maintain positions that they might not otherwise feel so strongly compelled to defend and further suggests the potential for abuse by charlatans.[8]

G. Śrīvidyā, Tantrism and the History of Indian Religions

Literary, historical and theological forms of analysis demonstrate conclusively that Śrīvidyā is a school of Sakta Tantrism but do little to place it within the mainstreams of Indian religions. While Śrīvidyā, and by analogy other Tantric sects, appear to retain certain elements of ancient Vedism no longer obvious to the classical Hindu period, this point must not be made at the expense of understanding Śrīvidyā as "outside" the currents of classical Hindu theology and practice. In fact, it can be argued that Śrīvidyā (and perhaps Hindu Tantrism as a whole) includes virtually all the major thematic issues of theory and practice present in classical Hindu tradition. A few major points of convergence between Tantrism and mainstream classical Hinduism begin to bring the issue to light.

(1) The concept of darśan and the significance of visual imagery, perhaps the most dominant theme in all Hindu

worship, popular or esoteric, is everywhere present in the Tantric tradition.[9] When the Śrīvidyā adept visualizes or comes into contact with the śrīcakra he does not imagine a representational metaphor for the structure of reality or for the union of Śiva and Śakti but the actual transcendent form of reality itself. For the Śrīvidyā adept, the image of the cakra, like the image of a deity, is infused with power and significance through ritual, iconographic symbolism and in the reciprocal relationship of devotion (bhakti) that underlies the Hindu's human/divine encounter. When the śrīcakra is established with this "life force" (i.e., undergone prāṇapratiṣṭha either permanently or temporarily) it is not merely a representation or symbol of god but a manifestation of divine power. It is not merely the image per se that gives shape to divinity but the image when established in appropriate ritual and theological relationships; divine power assumes these given forms both of its own accord (or out of divine "play") and for the sake of establishing a human relationship.

Thus the śrīcakra is not an accidental or humanly imagined configuration but the form that divinity has chosen to assume as the primordial, underlying structure of the universe. When infused with the presence of divinity the cakra's material configuration, as it appears on paper or metal, becomes an appropriate locus for the "concentrated"

presence of the Absolute. Each *śrīcakra* as a depiction of the divine's underlying "shape" becomes a center of divine power when ritually worshipped and, in the ritual process, a center of the universe located within the ordinary world. It is through this ritual transformation, this essentially human act in coordination with the divine power and form, that every adept locates himself in the universe as an essential ingredient, not merely an accidental or mere karmic occurrence. When a Śrīvidyā adept sits ritually before the *śrīcakra* and has its *darśan*, he or she encounters the divine, shares in its presence and begins the gradual process of dissolving the differences that separate one from the other. The initial point of conceptual departure---the theoretical identity of body and soul with the yantra serving as the configuration of the universe---also becomes the final goal of religious experience. In this non-dualist tradition, adepts affirm the distinction between subject and object (in this case between human and divine) through *darśan* in order to dismantle distinctions between human and divine natures. The ritual's aim is not to affirm a sacred space occupied by the *śrīcakra* in order to distinguish its "sacrality" from the "profane" ordinary world but to affect a transformation in understanding concerning the everyday world by identifying it as structured through the cakra's form.

One might suggest that the worship of the śrīcakra (vis a vis theological speculations about it) does not reenact the creation of the universe because, like many Hindus, Śrīvidyā adepts are interested in creation only as an accomplished fact. (Note also Hindu's present theological indifference to the god Brahma.) While the question of how creation takes place is of obvious importance to Śrīvidyā because of the particular shape the universe assumes, creation per se is a matter for theology and not necessarily crucial to a ritual practice that begins with creation (and its underlying form, i.e., the śrīcakra) as an already accomplished fact. Liberation is a return to the source of creation achieved by means of a systematic ritual deconstruction that traces the universe's material evolution (prakṛti) to its single spiritual (puruṣa) source.[10] According to adepts this "deconstructive method" (ritually visible in the samhāra krama mode of worship), however, does not "dissolve" the material universe or disprove its existence but merely removes the "false" distinctions that separate humanity from its divine source. While the ritual method is "negative" insofar as it "destroys" (samhāra) the distinctions of subject and object, its ultimate aim is to affirm reality and the possibility of human perfection. Srividya adepts continually emphasize that the experience of non-duality is an unqualified bliss (ānanda); it does not

occur on some "other" plane of existence but _in_ the seemingly ordinary world. (Like the Śāṅkarite _keveladvaitins_, Śrīvidyā affirms the possibility of embodied liberation (_jīvanmukti_).) The act of _darśan_ and ritual practice is intended to affirm creation by dissolving its appearances, not by rejecting its substantiality or fundamental divinity.

(2) Śrīvidyā's discipline is described as frequently as a sacrifice, _yajna_ or _yaga_, as it is as _sādhana_, a means of accomplishing stated goals. As we have observed, the external forms of sacrifice, the _bahiryāgas_, are similar in form to the Vedic rites carried into the mainstreams of classical Hindu practice. Tantrics, following in the footsteps of earlier Hindus, emphasize meaning and symbolism and thereby reinfuse power into otherwise superficial ritual actions; or to put it in terms familiar to Śrīvidyā, they transform external rites into internal sets of identifications, that is, acts of _bahiryāga_ into _antaryāga_.

While the Samayācārins are perhaps best noted for the _antaryāga_ concept, all of Śrīvidyā, including its Kaula branches, have laid stress on this point. The process, one might conclude, is not significantly different in intent from that of the authors of the _Āraṇyakas_ and the early Upaniṣads. Just as medieval Tantrics increasingly stress the subordination of ritual _actions_ (_kriyā_ or _karma_) to

knowledge (jñāna) and intentions, we observe a similar shift in emphasis earlier at the juncture of the ritualistic Brāhmaṇas and the early Upaniṣads. But unlike Śaṅkara and the kevalādvaitins who discredit the liberative power of ritual action in favor of pure insight (jñāna), Śākta Tantrics, like those within Śrīvidyā, incorporate both elements. Śāktas stress "knowledge" (jñāna) without forsaking action (karma) and also retain certain "pre-classical" Hindu values concerning the usefulness of mantras and role of ritual in the salvific process. Tantric ritual sacrifice, be it external or internal, serves a dual purpose as it does in Vedic and some classical non-Tantric Hindu practices such as the Mīmāṃsaka schools: it is directed not merely towards liberation but includes a power to affect natural and social events.

The majority of Śrīvidyā worshippers, despite historical connections with the Śaṅkara tradition, do not forsake the worldly life for one of renunciation, nor do they reject the value of ritual actions for obtaining liberation. Rather, they stress the importance of fulfilling the prescriptions of varṇāśramadharma by completing each stage of the life cycle and satisfying the aims of human life (puruṣārthas).

In this way Śākta Tantrics bear a closer resemblance to bhedābhedādvaitins such as Bhāskara the Vedāntin who, it

would appear, actually reflect the majority position of classical Hinduism in the late medieval period. This acceptance of a combination of action and knowledge for achieving liberation, the so-called *sammucayavāda*, also seems more in consonance with the views of the *Bhagavadgītā*, a text that by this late period is a pillar of Hindu orthodoxy. To less fervently ascetical and more worldly conscious theologians such as Bhāskara, the orderly progression of life through castes and stages (*varṇāśramadharma*) must not be interrupted---a view shared by most Tantrics and certainly the vast majority of historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts.

(3) As we have observed, Śākta Advaitism differs in important ways from the *kevalādvaita* of Śaṅkara especially in its preference for the *sammucayavada* and by its rather conventional approach to *varṇāśramadharma*. Much is made of the "abandoning" of caste among Tantrics but this too, as it appears from the evidence of the present study, is overstated if not entirely false. Just as Śaṅkara, despite his "leap" to the *sannyāsin* stage, did not disrespect the conventions of the Hindu social order, so caste and gender have not been forsaken among Tantrics as important criteria in the assessment of spiritual qualification; rather it appears that other considerations are made preeminent without abandoning concepts of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. As it so

happens, the majority of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts in south India assume a position not unlike that of the historical Śaṅkara: theoretically anyone meeting certain standards (such as those set forth in the so-called catuṣṭhaya sādhana) is qualified for spiritual discipline while in reality only male Brahmins seem to meet these requirements. Śrīvidyā lineages in contemporary south India do not all assert this position since women are sometimes admitted as adepts, but the majority have retained these fundamental patterns of belief and practice. In lineages that, for one reason or another, do not accept women initiates, the situation conforms even more closely with the "Vedic" tradition in which women were excluded from hearing scriptures or from partaking in all but exceptional sacrifices.

There is at least one obvious reason for caste discrimination within Tantric lineages that disavow its legitimacy: caste considerations do not simply disappear with initiation, especially within groups as rooted in certain social values, such as marriage and commensality, as south Indian smārta Brahmins. Lineages that admit members across caste lines, as we have seen, invariably make adjustments and distinctions regarding social and religious qualifications and actions.

The point is not simply that caste and gender continue

to matter to Tantrics but that a reevaluation of religious qualifications that places criteria other than caste and gender into the forefront is also not unique to Tantric traditions. Precedents are found even as far back as the period of the early Upaniṣads, such as the famous instruction given by Yajñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī (cf., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1f. and 4.5f.).

(4) The Tantric synthesis of concepts and values incorporating ritual and moral action (both included under the general heading of *karma*), meditative yoga (discussed under a variety of terms including *dhyāna*, *bhāvanā* and even *japa*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and the necessity of loving devotion (*bhakti*) to both divinity and teacher---what in general terms is seen to be the very heart of Tantric *sādhana*---is certainly not the least bit unique to Tantrism. One might be so bold as to suggest that Tantrics have learned the lessons of the *Bhagavadgītā* more convincingly than non-Tantric *kevavādvaitins* such as Śaṅkara or even the ritual-oriented Mīmāṃasakas. Each of these schools emphasizes one concept over the others, placing knowledge above ritual and devotion (as do the *kevelādvaitins*) or the liberative value of ritual over knowledge (as do certain Mīmāṃsakas). While there are others who claim a balanced or synthetic approach (all, including Rāmanuja, firmly within the "Vedic" fold), perhaps none have so deliberately brought

all of the Gītā's teachings together as have Tantrics. A more detailed examination of the deliberate appropriation of mainstream Hindu elements may prove significant for future Tantric studies especially with regard to its acceptance and practice within high-caste circles.

Śrīvidyā provides an example of how such mainstream elements are systematized into a coherent body of thought---coherent, but not without dichotomy and even conflict. Like Arjuna at the outset of Chapter Three of the Bhagavadgītā, many Śrīvidyā adepts are confronted with the dilemma of which alternative discipline is superior and which is considered superior within the tradition. Are the conflicts of knowledge and action or devotion and action real or apparent? Is the solution to emphasize one yoga over the others (the tactic favored by other advaitins such as Śaṅkara) or to work towards a synthesis even at the expense of a rigorously consistent rational? Just as action (karma) and knowledge (jñāna) are not considered logically inconsistent, likewise Śrīvidyā adepts historically and in the contemporary tradition do not view the yogas of the Bhagavadgītā as conflicting. Instead they prefer to combine and distinguish each as part of a whole discipline without considering one in opposition to another. Contradiction is transcended not by ignoring the seeming paradox but by generating levels of understanding and a hierarchy of

practice that allows, in the very least, a continuity of appearances between the lowest and highest positions. As a senior member of "Guru" Mandali put it:

> The ritual does not seem to differ much between the senior adepts and the younger disciples, the ritual action (*karma*) provides discipline and [makes use of] the *mantras* [to] bring about effects. No one, no matter how senior [an adept], abandons these practices or suggests to another that he is no longer in need of them. One may *not* be in need of them, but because they provide examples and serve to encourage the maintenance of the discipline they should continue. It is not our duty to confuse people about the spiritual path but to direct them. Not everyone can understand what is taught at the highest level, so there are many avenues of approach. But there certainly is a difference between those with more experience and those in earlier stages. For the experienced adept *bhakti* has been transformed into *jñāna*, as has the ritual---everything becomes, for us, a form of *jñāna* though we can still call one *bhakti* and the other *karma*. This is the real secret of *Śrīvidyā sādhana*; there is no conflict between these parts because all of them are actually aspects of the same thing, knowledge. But the inexperienced adept does not always see these things. For example, he speaks of the grace of God, as we do, but means something different than what we mean because for him God is something entirely different than himself. Even an experienced adept sometimes feels his own smallness in relation to God, and then he speaks of the need for God's grace and of his dependence on devotion. What we should understand is that all of these differences are made in order to see that there is no difference at all between ourselves and the [ultimately real] Brahman. There are many kinds of understanding and even the same person at different times feels himself at different levels of understanding.[11]

The incorporation of *bhakti*, *karma*, *yoga*/*dhyāna* and *jñāna* into Tantric discipline can also be seen in terms of

Śrīvidyā's three (or four) sided approach to liberation, namely, through (1) self effort which includes the physical yoga and mental dhyāna component as well as the acquisition of jñāna; (2) grace, developed on the basis of a bhakti oriented relationship with God; and (3) magic or supernaturalism, linked to performance of certain rituals and mantras and hence exhibiting a more fundamental notion of karma as ritually efficacious. Seen in these terms, Śrīvidyā's discipline not only exemplifies the synthetic qualities of the Bhagavadgītā but exhibits several generic categories of understanding liberation or salvation within the history of religions.

Thus individual self-effort, for example, deemed necessary in the quest for salvation may be relatively unimportant in a tradition emphasizing grace; Śrīvidyā, however, incorporates aspects of all three, self-effort, grace and magic, by subsuming or subordinating varieties of religious practice under the category of knowledge (jñāna). This tendency to view devotion or ritual as prerequisite to knowledge, we might add, is characteristic of all Indian non-dualists, Hindu or otherwise. In this respect Śrīvidyā is similar to Śaṅkara but unlike the kevelādvaitin committed to a logic based on the incompatibility of action and knowledge, the Śākta non-dualist accepts as inherently paradoxical the rational analysis of "dualistic" discourse.

H. Final Remarks

The present study only begins to consider the relationship of Tantrism to other forms of Indian religion and to investigate the various levels and types of worship that occur within Hindu Śākta tradition. Rather than attempt to formulate a conclusive definition of Tantrism it offers a case study of a sect that has grappled with Tantrism's principal concepts and values in ways that lead one to question the value of definitions too broad or too inclusive. Certainly this study's emphasis has been the points of convergence between Tantrism and non-Tantric Hinduism, but this can be attributed more to the sect under consideration than to the regional approach assumed as necessary for understanding Tantric tradition.

One is not led to the conclusion that the term "Tantra" lacks meaning either in contemporary India or as an historical description but that its use is no less controversial today than it has been in the past. Many intellectual Hindus, despite strong opinions and clearly defined sectarian identities, eschew simple categories and distrust the application of names without qualification. To ask a member of the Śrīvidyā tradition, "What is Tantra?" or "What is Śrīvidyā?", is to raise serious issues concerning

not only his or her religious practice but, in essence, to confront the whole meaning and quality of life. Like all people committed to a religious faith, Śrīvidyā adepts exemplify the fact that to lead the religious life is no different than live life in search of meaning.

* * * * * * * *

1. I do not believe my involvement with the tradition has hindered or significantly prejudiced these studies, and while it may potentially augment a critical appreciation of adepts' experiences, I do not mean to suggest either that I have been a purely "objective" observer. One might suggest that what is most fascinating about Śrīvidyā, or any religious tradition, is not its "objective" facts but the interpretations of faith and belief arising both from within and outside the parameters of the tradition.

3. This fundamental issue in religious studies relates directly to the issue of why this study has been undertaken. The question has prompted serious self reflection though the study was certainly not undertaken deliberately for such a purpose. As Dr. Sundaramoorthy and I became acquainted with individuals as involved and committed as ourselves, we began to realize that we must come to terms with our dual role as scholars and religious participants. Not only did we need to develop a critical eye regarding our own and others' involvement to provide dispassionate and disinterested scholarship, but we also needed to consider the points of convergence between the scholarly endeavor and our involvement.

In conclusion, I have not treated my personal involvement as conflicting with scholarly enquiry but as a dichotomy inherent in the investigation. If the study succeeds in meeting the standards of Western academic scholarship to the same degree that it has provided an avenue for the further development of faith, then it has exceeded its initial aims. While it may never be possible to "know" the hearts and minds of other adepts as they "know" themselves, given the present state of scholarship about Tantrics, this study cannot help but expand upon the possibilities for a more appreciative understanding.

3. My own position as "cultural outsider" also has played a role in shaping the present study though I would not suggest that this is a necessary a component to undertaking research on an esoteric religious tradition in the same way access to oral sources must be. Needless to say, my particular situation presented advantages and disadvantages, especially when considering difficulties involving caste and social position in a tradition dominated in south India by Brahmins. Only on rare occasions did my not being of Brahmin birth work distinctly to my disadvantage and certainly it was often better to be culturally "outside" the Indian social system than in a position of being perceived

as a social inferior within it. For an example of this situation see the introductory remarks to Part Two.

4. Goody, Jack, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

5. Such as the rather convoluted regional division of traditions presented in the *Śaktisamgamatantra*. See *HT*, p.43ff.

6. A senior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

7. It is not insignificant, it seems to me, that the term *hrdaya* in Sanskrit, refers to both the heart *and* the mind and one can argue that in traditional terms the two are not meant to be distinguished, that is, that the emotional and spiritual commitments of the "heart" should not be separated from rational and intellectual activities of the "mind".

8. One rather harmless but interesting example suggests the extent to which pious Hindus submit to centers of authority and especially to individual gurus. The senior Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāmākṣī Kāmakoṭi *pītha* in Kāñcipuram maintains that the Ādiśaṅkarācārya, that is, the author of the famous *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, etc., lived in the fifth century, B.C.E. or some 1200 years before the date decided upon by modern scholarship. This has discrepancy has put a number of contemporary Indian scholars of the *smārta* community in an unhappy position. Not wanting to seem impious or defiant of such a highly regarded and saintly figure, many feel compelled to argue for a position that they would not otherwise maintain; others simply refrain from stating an opinion in hopes of circumventing the appearance of conflict. What is a matter of historical enquiry has, in fact, become a highly sensitive and emotional issue. Furthermore, it demonstrates the degree to which religious authority can affect otherwise "scientific" fact and create a monopoly over good judgement and common sense.

9. On the concept of *darśan* see, Eck, Diana L., *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1981.

10. The obvious relationship to the Sāṅkhya system is evidenced here. Śāktas, in the process of utilizing similar notions, having offered a resolution to the fundamental difficulty in the Sāṅkhya system and retain the "appearances" of dualism. Precisely how and why the spiritual (*puruṣa*) and material (*prakṛti*) components are

"originally confused" and thus cause creation (according to the Sāṅkhyins) is not answered in ways that are particularly convincing to later Vedānta thinkers. Śāktas maintain that there is no confusion of two otherwise "unrelated" elements but a complimentary relationship that resolves in the two being fundamentally identical. Reality does assume the shape of dualism---dualistic reality is not a mere appearance---and the appearances are not "less real" than their source but rather identical to it at a more fundamental level. The only "confusion" that occurs is in the human mind that views itself as not belonging "fully" to the process. Śāktas generally assume the transformation of the One into many to be real, that is, they accept the so-called pariṇāmavāda, but they do not often posit this position as antithetical to the concepts that reality has merely appeared as dualistic (vivartavāda) or that it has actually not undergone any evolution (ajātivāda). They would object more vigorously to both of these latter positions if they did not maintain the position that holding one position over the other is a matter not of which is "true" but from which perspective one is viewing the Truth.

11. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

Introduction and Translation

of

The Tripurā Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Bhāskararāya

Appendix One

Appendix One
Introduction to the translation of the Tripurà Upaniṣadbhāṣya of Bhāskararāya

A. Remarks on the place of and date of Tripurā Upaniṣad within Śākta Tantrism

The Tripurā Upaniṣad belongs to a general group of texts with nebulous historical origins and often obscure theological content. Texts bearing the title "Upaniṣad", it would appear, continue to be written well into recent modern times with increasing attention given to sectarian concerns. Thus there exist "Upanisads" focusing on aspects of Śaiva, Sākta and Vaiṣṇava theology as well as a number on more abstract subjects such as Yoga or renunciation (sannyāsa). Among the Śàkta-oriented "Upaniṣads", perhaps no other single text offers as wide a selection of topics within a specific sectarian context as the Tripurā Upaniṣad.

Tripurā Upaniṣad belongs not only to Śāktism but to Srīvidyà's Kaula Tantric school of interpretation. Despite its bearing the title "Upaniṣad" and thus deliberately identifying its content as "Vedic" in origin, the Upaniṣad's sixteen verses are Tantric in both content and style. The text's arcane and technical Tantric vocabulary is obfuscated by a deliberate appropriation of an archaic quasi-Vedic language.

Concerning the date of Tripurā Upaniṣad, we are extremely limited by the available evidence. Its "Vedic"

language and presentation may only serve to complicate rather than clarify the problem. References to either to individual verses or to the text itself do not appear before the fifteenth century. Kaivalyāśrama, a commentator on the Saundaryalaharī who is likely to post-date Lakṣmīdhara (c. 1500) but precede the eighteenth century Bhāskararāya, is perhaps the first to mention the text by name or cite its contents.[1] It is not until Bhāskararāya (c. 1730) and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin (fl. 1740, also known as Rāmacandrendra Sarasvatī) compose commentaries on the text as a unit that it is certain that the verses do, in fact, exist and are viewed as a single, coherent piece. The absence of any mention of individual verses or text by earlier commentators, including even those of likely south Indian origins, such as Śrīvidyānandanātha author of the Saubhāgyaratnākara, seems to indicate (1) that the verses were not yet composed, (2) that text as a unit was perhaps not yet compiled or (3) that its contents (either as verses or a single text) were kept deliberately secret. It is also possible that its "stray" verses were not considered particularly important or useful for explicating doctrine and thus were left out of historical commentaries.

It does seem likely that the individual verses of the text existed independently before being compiled in a single source, if only because of the disjointed presentation of

materials. From even a cursory reading it is clear that the Upaniṣad's compiler(s) intended the coherence of the material to depend more on sectarian theme and subject than on the development of issues in a series of logically consecutive verses. Historically, one can only conclude that the Upaniṣad as a composite source appears to be of relatively recent origins (perhaps post-fifteenth century or slightly later) but that its author(s)/compiler(s) intended it as both a synthetic presentation of a number of subjects central to the Śrīvidyā school and as a work bearing the qualities and authority of archaic Vedic literature.

Within Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā from at least the period of Bhāskararāya the text has, in fact, achieved the status of Vedic revelation and been regarded as bearing the archaisms of Upaniṣadic literature. Bhāskararāya treats its archaic language and epigrammatic presentation as indicative of its "ancient" Vedic origins and as suggestive of its being a poetic revelation transcending human attribution (i.e., considered as apauruṣeya śrūti). All subsequent Srividya tradition has considered Tripurā Upaniṣad, along with a number of others including the Kaula, Bhāvanā, Āruṇa and Tripurātāpini Upaniṣads, not only as authoritative "Tantras" but as revelation (śrūti) transmitted from ancient times. There is little doubt in the minds of historical commentators and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts of the Kaula

branch of tradition (at least in south India) that the Tripurā and other Śākta Upaniṣads are considered ancient and entirely authoritative as "Vedic" sources.

B. Recensions of the Text, its Commentaries and its Importance in Historical and Contemporary Śrīvidyā

According to the commentators, the text itself seems to have been preserved in at least two recensions within two distinct branches (śākha) of Vedic tradition. Bhāskararāya notes that the text's existence in two forms and its explication in two traditions has led to differing opinions not only regarding terminology but interpretation. He makes his own position clear regarding his treatment of the text as belonging to the Ṛg Veda from the outset of his commentary but notes that different readings occur in its transmission within the Atharva Veda school. Bhāskararāya's specific placement of the Upanisad within a sub-branch of the Ṛg Vedic school does little to clarify its origins or transmission since his references are also obscure.[2] That the commentator Upaniṣadbrahmayogin also places the text within Ṛg and Atharva Veda branches only serves to confirm its transmission along two lines but does not further resolve variations within separate recensions.

The present translation is concerned primarily with Bhāskararāya's version of the primary text which, it would appear, is consistent in manuscripts including his comments.

While the traditional assignment of a "place" within the Vedic schools is less than clear, the version of the text favored by Bhāskararāya seems beyond dispute. The variations in the recensions of the primary text are noted only in passing in the notes to the translation, that is, as these differences in reading bring interpretive variations in the work of commentators other than Bhāskararāya. A brief mention should be made here of the existence of other commentaries before discussing in more detail the place of the text within Śrīvidyā and its importance to Bhāskararāya.

There are, in addition to Bhāskararāya's remarks, four other known historical commentaries on the Tripurā Upaniṣad. The commentary of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin that has already been mentioned is perhaps best known since editions and translations of the Upaniṣad based on this interpretation have been published by the Adyar Library in Madras.^{3} While it is not known precisely when this prolific author penned his commentary on this and 108 other Upanisads, his interpretative insights are all the more remarkable if only because he is historically not considered to be either a Śākta by affiliation nor a Śrīvidyā adept. Within contemporary Śrīvidyā this commentary is regarded more with admiration for the ability of the author to penetrate the text's language and meaning than as a "Śrīvidyā" interpretation. Since Upaniṣadbrahmayogin spent the

majority of his career in Kāñcipuram and was a contemporary of Bhāskararāya, it seems also remarkable that Bhāskararāya makes no specific mention of either his specific work or his opinions. This may be due to Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's writing not strictly within Śrīvidyā tradition, that is, as a non-initiate interpreter. Nonetheless, one cannot help but marvel at the ability of the author to unravel the obscure language of the text and offer an interpretation that often concurs in substance with that of sectarian Śrīvidyā initiates.

The commentary attributed to the famous Vedānta philosopher Appayya Dīkṣita I (fl. 1585) must surely be spurious though it is not certain to which "Appayya Diksīta" the commentary should be assigned. In any case, the remarks amount to less than half a printed page of text and add little to the interpretation of the Upaniṣad. It would appear that a later devotee in the line of this prolific scholar thought it appropriate that he should have remarked on a text such as the Tripurā Upaniṣad since comparable attributions are made regarding other Śākta Upanisads including the "sister" text of the Tripurā Upaniṣad, the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad.

The commentary attributed to one Gaṅgācarana Vedāntavagīśa is perhaps even more obscure than that of Appayya Dīkṣita. Having been edited and translated into

Bengali, the text appears to be of Bengali origins and is not known to exist in south India manuscript libraries nor is it known to any contemporary adepts with whom I had contact, either in north or south India.[4] I have had not the opportunity to view the commentary though it would appear by the list of other works attributed to this author that he too does not fall within the strict purview of initiated Śrīvidyā tradition. His obscurity especially in south India leads one to conclude that he has had no appreciable impact on the interpretation of Śrīvidyā in that region.

A commentary attributed to one Rāmānanda, also known as Rāmānandatīrtha or Vacaspati, is the subject of much confusion and dispute. The identification of the commentator on the Tripurā Upaniṣad with a Rāmānandatīrtha who flourished c.1650 should not be taken as a settled issue. The date, listed by Potter in his Bibliography edition of the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, assumes the attribution made by the compilers of the New Catalogus Catalogorum.[5] The author of this commentary and a comparable work on the Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad not listed except in the Adyar Library in Madras I do not believe to be the Advaita philosopher named by Potter and other catalogue editors. The Tripurā Upaniṣad commentary which appears until this author's name has been edited recently in

Vārānasi but differs significantly in substance from the edition which I have acquired from the Adyar Library.[6] It may be the case that there are two authors bearing the name Rāmānanda who commented on the Upanisad but it is certain that the author of the Adyar Library version is also the author of the Tripurātāpini commentary in the same collection. While not openly identifying himself as a Samayācārin, the Adyar commentator frequently mentions Lakṣmīdhara as authoritative and assumes Samayācāra positions not unlike Lakṣmīdhara's. It is regarding the mention of the pañcamakāras and the practice of kāmakalādhyāna that the confusion ensues. Rāmānanda merely remarks that the use of these "prohibited substances" and the practice of the controversial form of meditation belong to a different set of qualifications others than those he deems appropriate for the Srīvidyā worshipper. He does not openly condemn these practices as does Lakṣmīdhara, nor does he take the position that they are appropriate only for low caste (śūdra) practitioners (another position assumed by Lakṣmīdhara). This ambiguity leads one to question Rāmānanda's precise affiliations. Perhaps more important for the present study is that contemporary adepts had no knowledge of commentaries on Tripurā Upaniṣad by this author until I brought it (or them) to their attention. If Rāmānanda is a southern author, a point made by a number of

adept/scholars after having reviewed the manuscripts and edition of the commentary, then he appears to have had little or no impact on subsequent historical tradition. The mention of Lakṣmīdhara (actually the "familiar" name "Lolla", an unambiguous reference to Lakṣmīdhara) would date Rāmānanda to the post-1500. Since the commentary lacks any mention of other opinions and Bhāskararāya makes no mention of either the commentary or its opinions, it is possible that it was composed before Bhāskararāya's and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's works but it still seems improbable that it originates from the hand of the Rāmānandatīrtha of the mid-seventeenth century.

Bhāskararaya's is not only the best known commentary on Upaniṣad but a work bearing the marks of his mature scholarship. While his own date and the date of certain of his works, such as the commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma and the Setubandha on the VT, are fixed, the date of this commentary and the commentaries on Bhāvanā and Kaula Upaniṣads is not as precise.[7] While he mentions himself that the LSN commentary was completed in Samvat 1728 (1728, C.E.), the Setubandha on the VT in Śaka 1655 (1733, C.E. or perhaps, 1741 C.E.) and the Guptavatī on Durgaśaptaśatī in Samvat 1797 (1740, C.E.), he gives no firm indication of the precise completion date of his Upaniṣad commentaries nor does he suggest why these particular Śākta Upaniṣads were

selected for commentary. However, since he mentions these and other works within the Upaniṣad commentaries we can safely establish that they were composed in the mature period of his literary career, sometime after 1741, C.E.. He often mentions that ideas presented in the Upanisad commentary are taken up in detail elsewhere in his works and that the reader must assume these as familiar positions. Without his own remarks on his choice of texts one is only can only look to contemporary oral traditions for explanation. That he chooses the *Tripurā* over the *Tripurātāpini Upaniṣad* is perhaps the most remarkable fact since the latter takes up similar issues, especially regarding the *śrīvidyā* in much greater detail. In the words of one adept:

> It is most remarkable that Bhāskara[rāya] chooses the *Tripurā* (*Upanisad*) since one would suspect that if his interest is an exposition of external sacrifice (bahiryāga) as opposed to the internal sacrifice (antaryāga) taken up in the *Bhāvanā Upanisad* then the *Tripurātāpini* would have been the more logical choice. We can only assume that this Upaniṣad was important to his lineage since he views it as a companion to the *PKS* as he says at the conclusion and that the *Tripurātāpini* was not considered in that way.[8]

The adept cited above is quite correct in understanding that Bhāskararāya viewed the two Upaniṣads as dealing with different types of Śrīvidyā practice and interpretation as well as that the *Tripurā Upaniṣad* is consider the complement to the *PKS*. Precisely why Bhāskararāya took these positions

is less clear. The Tripurā Upaniṣad is not a ritual text per se especially when compared to the rather practically oriented PKS and its ritual handbook format. The material within the text may be taken both as "external" ritual and as presenting theoretical doctrine. That Bhāskararāya considered it primarily "external" oriented ritual (bahiryāga) may be due not only to its content but to a tradition concerning the use of the Upanisad. Tripurā and a number of other Upaniṣads, including Bhāvanā, are recited as devotionals and for their mantric value by contemporary adepts. Thus not only can the subject matter of the text be interpreted as dealing with external ritual (bahiryāga) but the text itself is frequently appropriated as a part of external forms of practice. It is not impossible (however speculative) to conclude that Bhāskararāya also had a tradition of the recitation of the Upaniṣad in mind when he remarked that it is a ritual companion to the PKS, however directed his comments seem to be towards the content of the text rather than its ritual use. It seems most likely that Bhāskararāya's choice of this Upaniṣad was to contrast its external ritual orientation to that of the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad and to place it in relationship with the PKS in some rather obscure way as a companion volume. The relationship of this commentary to his Kaula Upaniṣadbhāṣya is not stated and one can only conclude that his choice in this respect was to

identify his own interpretations of Śrīvidyā with Kaula oriented Sàkta Tantrism.

When taken without commentary, the Tripurā Upaniṣad is mysterious at best and utterly incomprehensible at worst. Within contemporary Śrīvidyā, the Tripurā Upaniṣad's appeal has not been limited to Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā adepts (with Rāmānanda as an historical example as well as its importance to so-called Samaya oriented contemporary lineages). In fact, because the Upanisad is considered a part of the Vedic tradition, both ancient and authoritative as revelation (śrūti) it has only gained in importance among those lineages which interpret Śrīvidyā as a fulfillment of Vedic tradition or as not "Tantric" in origin or ethos. Thus it is a significant work not only for those lineages claiming continuity with Bhāskararāya but even for more conservative, Samaya oriented lineages that interpret Śrīvidyā as "Vaidika" rather than "Tantrika". Regardless of its origins and, to some extent, its Kaula content (including the pañcamakāras and kāmakalādhyāna), the Tripurā Upaniṣad along with the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad has obtained a place of increasing importance in south Indian Śrīvidyā across the spectrum of interpretations from the period of Bhāskararāya.

While the shifting of subjects within the verses makes for a less coherent presentation and structuring of ideas

than is evident in other comparable sources, it also provides an opportunity for an adept as skillful as Bhāskararāya to summarize his views on a number of issues important to Śrīvidyā and Śākta Tantrism as a whole. In a similar way it present the outside observer with the opportunity to view Śrīvidyā within the Śākta Tantric tradition and to examine the positions of one of its leading proponents on a broad range of issues. As noted earlier, the Upaniṣad is not an introduction to Śākta Tantrism nor to Śrīvidyā, but it is an important source for the interpretation of a number of seminal concepts in both historical and contemporary contexts. Unlike the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad which focuses on the more narrow topic of the microcosm/macrocosm interpretation of the śrīcakra or even Bhāskararāya's VVR which centers on the śrīvidyā in its esoteric dimensions, the Tripurā Upaniṣad raises both issues and presents the opportunity to consider a general rather a specific or technical interpretation. The Upaniṣad with Bhāskararāya's commentary has the added virtue of never before having been translated into a European or vernacular Indian language.

C. Structure of the Verses of the Tripurā Upaniṣad

Viewing the Tripurā Upaniṣad as a single, coherent work requires not only complex rationalization but an effort of the imagination. The relationship between verses is hardly self-evident and to impose a structure on the whole of the text is not an exercise deemed of particular value by either historical or contemporary adepts. Śrīvidyā traditionalists have been content to attribute the text's disjointed presentation to its being an archaic, poetic revelation and have not generally considered its inner structure. Tripurā Upaniṣad in this respect, however, does differ significantly from the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad and it is a point that Bhāskararāya notes implicitly by his consideration of the latter as a deliberate and orderly series of ideas. This is not to say that Tripura Upaniṣad lacks thematic continuity but only that its conceptual structure does not depend on a specific order of presentation. One could conceivably picture the verses of the text in a different order though manuscripts do not offer such variations.

Verses one through five assert the supremacy of the goddess Lalitā Tripura[sundarī] by identifying her with śrīcakra and the yantra as the form of the expansion (prapañca) of the universe. According to Bhāskararāya and the other commentators, each portion of the śrīcakra, from its inner core to its outer gateways, is placed in

relationship with goddess as she manifests herself in the form of the universe. Verse six may be viewed as either shifting subjects or, in a sense, summarizing the previous five verses inasmuch as it identifies Lalitā as the supreme goddess---and hence another name for Tripurā---and maintains she is worshipped (in the form of the śrīcakra? or in places considered parts of a geographical śrīcakra?) at in certain key centers. Verse seven shifts subjects once again by turning towards the way in which the goddess of the śrīcakra is worshipped by the use of wine. The verse would seem more appropriately placed after verse twelve which lists the pañcamakāras as appropriate ritual offerings.

Verses eight and nine form a unit with the former presenting the śrīvidyā esoterically as the kādi form of the fifteen syllable mantra and the latter offering the hādi vidyā as a derivative of kādi. The fact that the hadi is treated as derivative form of kādi has not been lost on contemporary adepts who wish to affirm that this "Vedic" source asserts not only the superiority of kādi but its "originality". Verse ten would seem to belong with the first five verses since it shifts the subject back to śrīcakra but now in its relationship with the śrīvidyā. In this respect it is possible to see continuity with verses eight and nine.

Verses eleven and twelve raise two of the most

important and controversial issues in Srīvidyā: respectively the practice of kāmakalādhyāna and the ritual use of the pañcamakāras. These are obviously the verses which raise the greatest doubts concerning the "authenticity" of the text within non-Kaula lineages. That the two most controversial subjects within Śrīvidyā should follow one another suggests to some contemporary Kaula adepts that their inclusion is affirmed from the "earliest" stages of the tradition; to non-Kaula traditionalists, it suggests that the verses may be interpolations.

Verses thirteen through fifteen return to the physical forms of the goddess and her theological identity with Śiva and the Absolute. But they can be taken as a unit only by a reading into the verses a continuity of theme since there is no obvious stated or implied relationship between them. Verse fifteen summarizes the teaching of the text by maintaining that realization with the goddess is achieving unity with the Absolute and that this is the culmination of spiritual discipline (sādhana in both ritual and meditative dimensions). It may once have been the texts concluding remarks. Verse sixteen, in a way not unlike the ways in which the ṣoḍaśī forms of the mantra seem to append themselves to an "original" fifteen unit form or, in general, the way "sixteenths" append to units of "fifteen" (and "fourths" to triads), appends itself to the fifteen

previous verses of the text. It extols the greatness of the text and its value in the liberative process but adds little to either its theological or ritual import.

In summary, it is clear that Tripurā Upaniṣad provides a remarkable opportunity for adepts to address a number of subjects central to Śākta Tantrism and Śrīvidyā in general. In addition, its summary form and shifting subjects allow the outsider to view the tradition more holistically than is otherwise possible in so short an exposition. While Tripurā Upaniṣad lacks the thoroughness of a work like the Setubandha it is comparable inasmuch as it raises a remarkable number of issues in a far more limited space. Thus it would seem important both to Śrividya traditionalists and to observers of the tradition.

D. Remarks on the Present Translation

Though a new edition of the Sanskrit text is in order, the present translation in order to fit into the scope of the whole dissertation project must be satisfied with a "corrected" or emended version of an edition that already exists. By reviewing a number of manuscripts and comparing them to Sitarama Shastri's 1922 edition of the Tripurā Upaniṣad as it appears in Kaula and other Upánisads (an edition including both Bhāskararāya's and Appayya Dīkṣita's commentaries), I have prepared in the notes many needed

emendations to text. When compared to other manuscripts it was soon clear that the printed edition was lacking in substance as well as grammatically flawed to the extent of being unintelligible. It was my original intent to translate only the available printed edition of the text and to include here not only the Tripurā but the Kaula Upaniṣad as well but upon careful review of the Shastri edition it became clear that serious revisions were in order at even the superficial level of grammatical consistency. This turned a modest translation project into a serious philological exercise.

The notes to the translation offer corrections resulting not only from a comparative review of manuscripts but as the text is read and interpreted by a number of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts. In other words, criteria for determining the "best" reading of the text includes the interpretations of living adepts as well as making the most sound philological choices. While this may be a bit out of the ordinary, the method I believe is justified by the nature of the text itself: as a Tantric source, its understanding depends on living, oral traditions, traditions which also have a privileged access to the written commentarial traditions. In the vast majority of cases philological criteria provided the most convincing arguments for inclusion or revision of the text, but in select

instances (cited in the notes) the living traditionalists offered invaluable advice for understanding both the verses and Bhāskararāya's gnomic phrasings.

Of the five manuscripts I reviewed in manuscript libraries in India I deemed two of them most useful for the present set of emendations. While the edition that results from these emendations cannot be considered "critical", there can be little doubt that it offers a very significant improvement on Shastri's printed edition. I also considered a "corrected" copy of Shastri's text offered for my review by Dr. S. Venkataraghavan of Madras. The manuscripts under consideration are as follows:

1. A Telugu script version copied into a ledger notebook by one K. Sastry in 1916 including Bhāskararāya commentary is available in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library at the University of Madras. This mss. bears the number 1044 but is catalogued at present, according to the librarians, following a "different system" than the original numbering system. It is, in any case, a fair and valuable copy of the text and provided many useful emendations. It is referred to in the notes by the abbreviation GOML (for Gov't Oriental Manuscripts Library version).

2. A manuscript in Devanagari script of uncertain age, copied on paper was provided for me by the Adyar Library in Madras and with the consent of Dr. K. Kunjinniraja a photo-copy was supplied. This manuscript including Bhāskararāya's comments was extremely useful and was the best grammatical version of the text available, including Shastri's text. Its readings on grammatical points are usually preferred. This text is referred to as **Adyar** in the notes.

3. A manuscript in Devanagari script copied into a small ledger in 1906 (manuscript copier unknown) with Bhāskararāya's remarks also exists in the Government Oriental Manuscript Library but it is in an unfortunate state of decay. Dr. Venkataraghavan was kind enough to help me retrieve certain portions of the text that proved quite

valuable. This referred to as **GOML II** in the notes.

4. A manuscript in Malayalam script was reviewed at the Adyar library and only cursory notes were taken as it appeared to be full of errors in grammar and lacking certain vital remarks. It was, however, useful for confirming the reading of one of the other manuscripts over another and thus served a purpose not unlike that of the fifth manuscript cited below.

5. A manuscript in Grantha characters was shown to me by a Śrīvidyā adept in Madras who claimed it passed through his lineage for at least three generations. The text had comparative value but was found less useful as a primary source of revision than **GOML** or **Adyar**.

Mention should be made here of the efforts and assistance of Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy, Chairman of the Sanskrit Department of Madurai-Kamaraj University, for his help not only in preparing the emendations of the Sanskrit text but for his painstaking efforts to improve the translation into English. Dr. Sundaramoorthy's scholarship in Tantrism and Śāktism and his contribution to the present effort should not go unnoticed. He reviewed each part of the translation word by word, made innumerable corrections and often spared the translator from making embarrassing errors.

1. Regarding Kaivalyāśrama's work see Part One, Chapters Three and Four.

2. Bhāskararāya's remarks in verse at the opening of his commentary it seems only make matters more confusing, especially with regard to his reference to the *Śrī Saṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra*, a text with no known reference. See endnote two on Bhāskararāya's opening comments for further discussion of the problem.

3. For editions see below, notes to the translation and the bibliography for details.

4. For a reference to this source see the citation listed in Potter, Karl, compiler and editor, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, *Vol. I*, *Bibliography*, Revised Second Edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, p.286.

5. See Potter as cited above, p.420.

6. See Sastry, A. K., editor, *The Tripurā Upanisad with the commentaries of Rāmānanda and Bhāskararāya*. Varanasi: Hanuman Ghat, 1984. This edition plagiarizes the edition of Bhāskararāya's commentary as it was originally presented by Sitarama Shastri in: *Kaula and other Upanisads*. Calcutta-London: University Press, 1922. (Tantrik Text, XI) It seems impossible that the exact errors which appear is Sitarama Shastri's edition should appear in the subsequent edition. This unfortunately casts doubt on the integrity of the edition of Rāmānanda's commentary as well though this has not appeared in print before. As noted, the Adyar manuscript differs so significantly from this printed edition one is left wondering how the printed edition was compiled and from what manuscripts since none of this information is provided by the editor.

7. On the life and date of Bhāskararāya see the Introduction to the *VVR* as cited in the Bibliography.

8. Naṭarāja of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, March, 1984.

Śrī

Tripurāmahopaniṣad

OM! May my speech and mind be peaceful!
Let there be prosperity!

The commentary on the Tripurāmahopaniṣad by Bhāskararāya

OM! Peace, peace, peace

> How can it be said that one does not see the arising of one lotus in [yet another] lotus when the two feet of the Teacher (*śrī nātha*) are [touching] the thousand-petalled [*lotus of my own* head]? [1]
>
> I shall now comment on that great *Upaniṣad* consisting of sixteen verses, belonging to the central portion of the *Araṇyaka*; studied by Ṛg Vedic experts (*bahvṛca*) who perform rituals in accordance with *the Śrī Sāṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra*, to whom the mantras are *those belonging to the Sākala* school [of the Ṛg *Veda*], and for whom *Kausītaka* is the *Brāhmaṇa* [*text followed*].[2]

Now in this respect the *Veda* which is studied by those belonging to the three estates (*traivarṇikaiḥ*) is divided twofold according to the *pūrva* and *uttara* sections.[3] That [Veda], even though it is twofold, is intended (*pravṛttaḥ*) to specify a particular action either directly or indirectly.[4] Furthermore, some rituals (*kriyā*) are associated with deities as in the worship of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Agni, while others are not associated with deities, such as bathing (the image as an accessory) for a fire sacrifice (*agnihotra*).[5]

Qualified persons (*adhikāriṇaḥ*) who believe (*viśvāsīla*) there is a soul different from the body capable of going to and returning from the other (heavenly) world indulge in

rituals (kriyā) which yield other-worldly results.

Similarly, only those who believe there is a power (śakti) in the deities, in spite of its being unseen by us, capable of granting what is desired indulge in the worship of Rama, Krsna and others. Intending only these persons, Badarayana and others advocated [the worship of] images of deities.[6] But despite the real presence (devatāsadbhāva) of the deities, those wavering in faith due to the influence of actions (karma) in previous births are qualified only for the rituals (karma) described in the pūrva section [of the Veda] and not for the [contemplative] worship (upāsana) of the deities. Intending only these people [who waver in faith], Jaimini and others advocated only the doctrine of the priority of ritual (karmapradhānyavāda) by rejecting the five forms of deities, including images.[7] When some who have performed ritual actions (karma) diligently and whose karma has come to fruition undertake the [external] worship (pūjā) of Śiva they are criticized in the Mṛgendra Saṃhitā commentary [of Narāyanakaṇṭha] for enjoining the abandonment of mīmāṃsaka doctrines.[8]

But even those contemplative worshippers (upāsaka) of a deity who know the secret intention of the five forms including images and the rest, need not reject the doctrine of the priority of ritual action.[9] In such a situation for those diligent in ritual actions yet without any special ripening of the mind there does not arise the conviction

(viśvāsa) to perform [contemplative worship (upāsana) of a deity]. By destructive logic, if doubt arises in that object in which one depended previously then there occurs a loss of both [that previous faith and what was not yet been fully understood]. Hence, in order to protect those [who are dependent on ritual actions alone for their faith] even contemplative worshippers (upāsaka) should perform rituals (karma) in the same way as if they had convictions [in their absolute efficacy]. With this intention [it is stated in the Bhagavadgītā]:

> You ought to act also considering the welfare of the world.[10]

These and others [similar] are the injunctions. While,

> One should not bring about confusion in the minds of the ignorant attached to action.[11]

These and others [similar] are the prohibitions. Even those who follow the higher path (uttarabhūmikādhirūḍhaivapi) should maintain the views of the lower and it is necessary that they not reveal their own opinions--this is the essence of what is meant. Therefore it is established that these injunctions and prohibitions apply even to those who are liberated while yet living (jīvanmukta) travelling on the path which transcends the three guṇas [that permeate the material world].[12]

But to those in whom the ripening of the mind is observed to be firm by their practice of rituals (karma) in

many [previous] births, as discussed in the *pūrva* [portions of the Vedas], after analyzing such persons carefully, one's own views should be gradually revealed. Otherwise there is danger of breaking the tradition (*sampradāya*). Those various levels (*bhūmikabheda*) which lead up to the contemplative worship (*upāsti*) of [the Goddess] Tripurasundari I have presented in detail in the *Setubandha* commentary on the *Vāmakeśvaratantra*.[13]

However, in those texts [which espouse] contemplative worship (*upāsana*) priority is given only to the deities; priority is not on ritual action (*karma*). Indeed because of the absence of a priority on ritual actions (*kriyā*) it is appropriate to say that Vedānta reveals its object as accomplish [through the contemplative worship rather than ritual action] on the forms of the deities.[14]

There are three forms of deity: physical (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) and supreme (*para*). Now the first [gross form of the deity] is described in the respective verses for meditation (*dhyānaśloka*); the second [subtle form] consists of the respective root-mantra (*mūlamantra*); the third [transcendent form] consists of contemplative worship (*upāsana*). Because of the threefold form of the deities contemplative worship (*upāsti*) is divided threefold respectively into external sacrifice (*bahiryāga*), silent repetition (*japa*) [of the mantra] and internal sacrifice (*antaryāga*).[15] All of these [three types of contemplative

worship] are instructed in the Ṛg Veda in the form of [this] great Upaniṣad beginning with the words, "the three cities" (tisraḥpura) and ending with "upaniṣad".

On the strength of the third and the tenth verses [of the text] it can be said that the intention of this Upaniṣad is to praise the supreme deity. In order to indicate the principle deity the first verse is said:[16]

[VERSE ONE]

> She is presiding over the three cities and the three paths [and this śrīcakra] in which the syllables a', ka' and tha' [representing the forty-eight letters of Sanskrit are inscribed]. [She is] the abode of all, deathless, ancient, great [and] the principal cause of the greatness of the gods.[17]

There are five types of liberation: [1] being in the same world (sālokya) is one; [2-4] proximity (samīpya), similarity in form (sarūpya) and union (sāyujya) [though] three [are taken as a single unit] and [5] identity (kaivalya).[18] Among these [five] the first and the last are one path (mārga) each and the middle group of three are another path.[19] Thus the Taittirīya [śruti] says:

> The learned one [who dies] when the sun is in the northern path, going to the splendor of the gods, obtains union (sāyujya) with Āditya; whoso [dies] when the sun is in the southern path, going to the spelendor of the forefathers, obtains union (sāyujya) and being in the same world (sālokya) as the moon. These are the splendors of the sun and the moon. The learned brahmana is victorious [and rejects these two] and therefore obtains the splendor of Brahman, thus the splendor of Brahman.[20]

The idea is this: Yogis who withhold their semen (ūrdhvaretasām) performing ritual action according to their respective stage in life (āśrama) obtain the world of the moon in the form of being in the same world (sālokyarūpa) [with the deity]; those who perform contemplative worship (upāsana) holding a particular [deity] as one's own master obtain similarity in form (sārūpya) [with the deity]; those who perform contemplative worship on their own self-identity (ahaṃgraha) obtain union (sāyujya) [with the deity]. These three [forms of contemplative worship] are in the form of obtaining the sun (āditya). But those who possess knowledge of Brahman in the form of a contemplative worship on the qualitiless (nirguṇopāsti), they obtain the place (pada) of Brahman in the form of identity (kaivalya) [with Brahman]. In the second section of the Viṣṇupurāṇa these three paths have been elaborated, beginning with the verse,

> North of the Agastya [asterism] and south of the Ajavīthi [asterism] is the path of the forefathers, just outside the path of Vaisvānara.[21]

and ending with the verse,

> The seer with knowledge and discrimination goes to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu.[22]

Because there are three paths (mārga) the cities [mentioned in the verse] are understood to be three.[23] Because [She] pervades the three cities, fills [them] and is in the form of them, the Supreme Deity is called Tripurā

[that is, the Three Cities].[24]

> By knowledge of the Self (*ātman*), by inward [contemplative worship], by knowledge of the Mother, by meditation on the "I" and by devotional action (*karma*), a mortal obtains the place of identity (*kaivalya*).[25]

This fivefold division [of liberation] into three [paths] explains the attainment of the Goddess.[26] Therefore She alone is [the one] called the three cities [in Verse One][27]; She alone is the three paths [that is, the compound in the verse is explained as a *bahuvrīhi*] She of whom there are three paths (*panthānaḥ*) [for obtaining Her liberation]. Since it is not in a *tatpuruṣa* compound [the word *tripathā* as it is used in Verse One] is not [taken] in the neuter gender [on the authority of the Katyāyana *Varittika*], "[the word] *patha* ending with a *samasanta* affix [see Panini 2.4.17] is neuter when compounded with a numeral or an *avyaya*, as in *tripatham*, *supatham*, etc., but not so in the *supantha* and *atipantha* where the *samāsānta* has not been added because of the prohibition stated in Panini 5.4.69." [28]

According to the Vedic etymologists the word *carṣaṇī* [as it occurs in Verse One] means people.[29] The Goddess alone is called *viśvacarṣiṇī* [literally, the people of the universe] [because] She is the one in whom all (*viśva*), that is, the whole of the people (*carṣiṇī*) [or] creatures [find existence]. This is as much as to say that She is the

creator (*utpādika*) of the living world; or that She is all-seeing (*viśvadṛṣṭi*). This is to be understood [in the context of the verse], "That One thought 'Let me be many. Let me propagate.'"[30] Being so established in the *Śruti*, Brahman's initial seeing is omniscient [and] that [Brahman] is [in its initial act of creation] the form of desire and the form of action.[31] In another *Śruti* [it is said], "That desired, that performed austerity".[32] [And also,] "knowledge, strength and action are inherent" is said in the *Śruti*.[33] Even though the initial modification (*vṛtti*) is not different from Brahman it is said to have the form of knowledge (*jñāna*), desire (*icchā*) and action (*kṛti*).

That [initial] modification [of the One into many] is [technically] called *śānta* [literally "peaceful] because it is the aggregate form of desire, knowledge and action.[34] It [insofar as She is Brahman] is called transcendent (*parā*) because it is the aggregate form of [the four emanations of sound in its primordial evolution technically called] *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*].[35] She is called [by the name] *Ambikā* because She is the aggregate form of [the three consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and their respective powers, namely] *Vāmā*, *Jyeṣṭhā* and *Raudrī*.[36] She in Her peaceful aspect is the deity of the [central point known as the] *baindava cakra* established in the *sricakra*. It has been said in the *Nityāhṛdaya* and elsewhere that the supreme Brahman [insofar as it is],

> ...the *baindava cakra* [i.e., the *bindu* of the *śrīcakra*, it] has the nature of the three Little Mothers (*mātṛkās*) [viz., the technical devolutions of Brahman as sound (*śabda*) known as *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*] and it pervades the place of the universal waves [i.e., the world consisting of the thirty-six *tattvas*].[37]

And [it is] that [*baindava cakra*] alone which is indicated by the three adjectives [given in Verse One] beginning with "the three cities" [that is, *tisraḥpura*, *patha* and *viśvacarini*]. The [use of] plural and singular adjectives indicates that what is qualified is simultaneously a single and threefold form.

Brahma that is not different from liberation has also been discussed in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*:

> Her *mandala* consists of triangles (*trikoṇa*), the outer gates (*bhūpura*) consist of three lines; Her mantra also is said to consist of three syllables and similarly She has a threefold form.[38] *Kundalinī śakti* is threefold and there are three deities in Creation. Because everything [connected with Her] is three, She is called Tripura.

The description thus far having been from the point of view of the creation of objects (*artha*), from [the word] "where" (*yatra*) [onwards] She is described from the point of view of the creation of sounds (*śabda*). [The word] "where" [in the verse] means She in whom Tripurā [the Goddess of the Three Cities, manifests] as the peaceful form [called] Ambikā, etc. [The word] *akathāḥ* means the sixteen [vowels] beginning with [the letter] "a", the sixteen [consonants] beginning with "ka" [and the sixteen remaining consonants

that] begin with "tha".[39] These are the syllables (*akṣaras*) [referred to in the verse] and these syllables are combined [and thus are called in the verse, *saṁvistha*, combined]. As the banyan tree is found in its seed, so these [syllables] contain everything and are complete.[40]

The letter "h" because its original form (*svarūpa*) [emanates from] the reflective aspect (*vimarśa*) [rather than the illuminative (*prakāśa*)] is not counted separately [as a letter].[41]

[This is] in accordance with the saying,

> The letter "h" is praised as having the form of *kalā* [in the scheme of the 36 *tattvas* that make up reality] and is described as *vimarśa*, reflection.[42]

The letter "ḷ" [the Vedic retroflex] is not different [for mantric purposes] from "*l*" [so it too is not counted separately]; and the letter "*kṣ*" is only a conjunction of the letters "*k*" and "ṣ" and is not independent [and thus not counted separately]. Therefore the *mātṛkā* letters [for the purposes of the *mantraśāstra*] number only forty-eight [not fifty-one].[43] And it further says in the *Sūtasamhitā*,

> I salute the Supreme Kalā who is one, two-fold, three-fold and similarly sixteen-fold, She who is divided into thirty-two [aspects].[44]

[She is] two-fold by the division into vowels and consonants. The meaning is that the vowels are sixteen and the consonants thirty-two.[45]

[By the word] "dwelling in" (*adhiṣṭhāya*) is meant the

Supreme Deity who is worshipped (*upāsayām*) as presiding over that [*baindava cakra*], the very form (*svarūpa*) of the *bindu cakra* [as the center point of the *śrīcakra*] having been described in the first half [of the verse]. Regarding this [*bindu cakra*] there is some deity presiding over the three cities (*tripurā*) which is in form of the *bindu* [in the center of the *śrīcakra*].[46] [The verb] "it is" (*asti*) is to be imported here in accordance with the dictum of Katyayana [in his *Varttikas* on Pāṇini] which says, "After a third person noun even though '*asti*' or '*bhavati*' [meaning 'it is'] does not occur its [meaning] should be imported."[47] Or the continuative [form of the] verb (*lyapo'nvayaḥ*) is to be connected with the action prescribed in the later mantra.[48]

That Goddess is [described in the verse as] "without decay" (*ajarā*) [meaning She is] without death. "[The verbal root] √*jṛṣ* [from which *ajarā* is derived] is used in the sense of diminishing age (*hāni*)", thus the word *hāni* [as it occurs in the *Dhātupāda* as shown here] precisely indicates the destruction of death [not merely the absence of old age].[49]

[The word] "ancient" (*purāṇi*) [in the verse means] beginningless (*anādi*), [that is] one without birth. [She is called] *mahattarā* [in the verse], [that is] supreme in all respects even among the known deities called Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[50] And [She is described further in the Verse as the one] who is that form of *mahimā*, the greatness of those

deities.[51] She alone is the primary cause (nidānam) of the greatness of other deities, that is to say, [these deities] obtain greatness by worshipping (upāsitāyam) Her.[52]

> Śambhu worships (pūjayate) the Goddess who is auspicious (śubhā) and possesses the power of the mantra (mantraśaktimayī).[53]

The different images (ambapratimābhedānām) of the Mother which are to be worshipped (pūjanīyānām) by all the gods have been elaborated in detail in the Padmapurāṇa through stories such as this one.[54] And similarly from the dictum, 'A beggar does not beg from another beggar when someone who is not a beggar is also present', the implication is that with reference to the contemplative worship (upāsti) of other deities, the worship (upāsti) of the Supreme Goddess takes preference.[55] It has been said by me in the Paraśivastava,

> O Supreme Śiva, why should I, a beggar, beg from Viṣṇu, Brahma, Indra and other beggars, those who enjoy mastery and wealth given by you, saying °do thou give me'. Even an ignorant man who already enjoys the result of a twelve-days' sacrifice only desires the result of a jyotiṣṭoma [sacrifice, which is superior to a twelve-days' sacrifice] and not the result of a twelve-days' sacrifice.[56]

[The epithets in the verse beginning with the word] "ajara" ("without death") indicate epithets of Brahma the Supreme Deity presiding over the cycle (cakra) of Brahmas [who create the world anew at the beginning of each cosmic cycle]. The word "deity" (devatā) is in the feminine gender intending to indicate its signifying [the Goddess].[57]

Therefore in other scriptures (śruti) words such as ajarā, deathless, are used in the neuter gender [rather than in the feminine as is here the case]. Similarly the followers of the Ātharvaṇi school say,

> The unassailable city of the gods has eight cakras and nine doors, Her golden sheath is the heavenly world surrounded by light.
>
> In that three-fold golden sheath established in three ways, the Knowers of Brahman know that in that [golden sheath] is possessed the worshipful Self.58

The sense of the verse is that above the eight cakras beginning with [the outermost] bhūpura [forming the three-lined gateway of the sricakra] and ending with the trikoṇa [the innermost triangle] is a sheath surrounding the bindu with its three forms [that is, the bindu as expanded into the trikoṇa]. In this [bindu] the Great Being is present [though it is not visible by virtue of the sheath]. Its being ineligible [therefore] for external worship (bahirpūjā) is indicated by [the word] yakṣa [that is, Great Being]. Only the knowers of Brahman know that [the bindu] is identical with the Supreme Goddess and only within themselves. Others do not [know this]. This has been discussed in detail in the Setubandha [my commentary on the Vāmakeśvaratantra].59

Thus having discussed the bindu cakra, the second verse, beginning with the words, "the nine Yonis", is pronounced in order to indicate the cakra whose nature is the nine Yonis and whose form is an aggregate of the [inner

triangle of the _śrīcakra_ known as the] _trikoṇa_ and the [sub-cakra consisting of eight minor triangles called the] _vasukoṇa_.[60]

1. Bhāskararāya offers the image of the student prostrating before his teacher touching his head to the teacher's feet in obeisance. The 'thousand-petalled lotus' is the *sahasraka* cakra described in yogic theory as the source of realization that lies at the top of the brain. The author is punning on the logic that no one sees an ordinary lotus simply sprout from another but here he says the lotus-like center of realization blossoms by having performed service at the lotus-like feet of the teacher.

2. The meaning of the verse here is clear enough. The other major commentators on the text, Upaniṣadbrahmayogin and Rāmānanda both agree that the Upaniṣad belongs to the Rg Vedic schools yet in several instances Bhāskararāya mentions that it also is followed by Ātharvavedins. It is, of course, that the text was learned in both Vedic schools and that Bhāskararāya being a Ṛgvedin prefers this recension and interpretation.

What is meant by the "*Sāṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra*" is unclear since there is no known text by this name. Does he mean both the *srauta* and *grhya sūtras* bearing the same name?

According to Winternitz the only recension of the Rg Veda surviving belongs to the Sākala school with which Bhaskararaya identifies. See Winternitz, Maurice, *History of Indian Literature*, *Vol. I*, translated by Mrs. S. Ketkar. Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, Second edition 1972, p.57 ftn.1. Winternitz also says concerning the *Araṇyaka* (p.235 as cited above), "The Kausītaka-Brāhmaṇa, which also belongs to the Ṛg-Veda, ends with the Kauśitaki-Aranyaka, of which the Kauśītaki-Upaniṣad (also called the Kausitaki-Brahmana-Upanisad) forms only a part." Our text, however, does not appear in the *Araṇyaka* as printed. For translation of the *Sāṅkhyāyana Araṇyaka* see Winternitz as cited, p.235, ftn.1. Concerning the *Kauśītaka Brāhmaṇa* see Keith, A.B., trsl., *Ṛgveda Brahmanas: the Aitareya and Kauśītaka Brāhmaṇas of the Ṛgveda*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, First edition 1920, reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.

3. *Traivarnikaih*, that is, "by those belonging to the three estates. This follows the standard Hindu interpretation whereby only members of the twice-born castes, the Brahmanas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiṣyas are entitled to Vedic study.

The division of the Vedic sources into *pūrva*, literally 'earlier' and *uttara*, 'later', sections (*khaṇḍas*) refers to the distinction between ritual and speculative subjects respectively.

4. Bhāskararāya has in mind those who would separate action (**karma**) and knowledge (**jñāna**) as described in the respective **pūrva** and **uttara** sections of the Vedas as being mutually opposed. He suggests that even the knowledge-oriented sections, the **uttara khaṇḍa**, instruct some form of action. This goes against the views of the strict **kevalādvaitins** such as Śaṅkara who treat action and knowledge as utterly separate.

By "directly" is meant that the text itself enjoins the action while "indirectly" indicates that the injunction comes through some other means.

5. Emend to read **rāmakṛṣṇopāstvādayo'gnyupāstvadayaśca** following GOML.

6. Bādarāyaṇa is the traditionally attributed author of the **Brahmasūtras**, one of the cornerstones of Vedānta teaching, the others being the Upaniṣads and the **Bhagavadgītā**.

7. Jaimini, the traditional author of the Mīmāṁsasūtras, is at the forefront of the Ritualist schools (mīmāṁsa) that maintained the primacy and efficacy of ritual actions as fulfilling the injunctions of the Vedas and leading to liberation. They are placed in contrast here to those advocating knowledge as liberative. Bhāskararāya's view, not unlike that of Śaṅkara on this point, is that ritual is a necessary prerequisite to the higher path' of knowledge. Where he differs from Śaṅkara most evidently is in his belief that (1) knowledge is a species of action albeit a very different kind that ordinary ritual action, and hence (2) that knowledge and action are not mutually contradictory, and (3) that ritual action (or action in general) should not be given up once knowledge is the goal or is achieved.

8. The remark should be understood to mean that had such persons not thought they would gain by doing rituals in the first place and then abandon their worship of Śiva, they would not now be criticized for having abandoned the principles of Mīmāṃsa. Bhāskararāya does not imply that **Mṛgendra Saṃhitā** which is a Śaiva Āgama criticizes Saiva ritual. See **Mṛgendra Saṃhitā**, chapter one, verses 2-6 with the commentary in Śrī **Mṛgendramkāmikopāgamam with the vṛtti by** Śrī Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇakaṇṭha, edited by K. and N. Kṛṣṇaśāstri. Devakottai, India: Devakottai Sivagama-siddhāntaparipalanasaṅgha, 1928. Also verses 2-20 with commentary in **The Mṛgendra Tantram with the commentary of Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha**, edited with a preface by Pt. Madhusudan Kaul Sastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1930. (No.50 of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies).

Emend **śivaśaktipūjāyāṃ** to **śivapūjāyām**.

9. Precisely what is meant by the phrase **vigrahādipañcakanirāsena** is not clear, that is, what are the *five* forms of the deities beginning with the **vigraha** or anthropomorphic aspect. Many Hindu deities in various aspects share the triad configuration of Tripurasundari, they have in addition to an anthropomorphic form mantra and yantra forms. What the other two Bhaskararaya has in mind was not known to living adepts and remains a mystery.

Emend to **pradhāṇyavāda eva.**

10. *Bhagavadgītā*, 3.20.

11. *Bhagavadgītā*, 3.26. Śaṅkara in his commentary on this verse also encourages the wise to support the continuance of actions by ignorant people, but wise persons themselves. Bhāskararāya differs on this detail as the text makes perfectly clear.

12. Bhāskararāya affirms the basic Śākta Tantric view supporting the possibility of liberation while yet living in the world but differs from Śaṅkara significantly on the issue by affirming that *jīvanmuktas* should continue to abide by the injunctions and prohibitions of the scriptures and should continue to perform rituals for the sake of others or for making an appropriate appearance.

13. cf., Bhāskararāya's remarks on *Vāmakeśvaratantra* (*Nityāsoḍaśikārṇava*) 1.1. and the commentary up to the beginning of the first verse. Contained here is a discussion of the various levels (*bhūmikas*) that lead up to the worship of Tripurā, considered the highest level of worship. See the *Nityāsoḍaśikārṇava (Vāmakeśvaratantra), with the commentary of Bhāskararāya* (in Sanskrit), edited by Ma. Ma. Pra. Kasinatha Vasudeva Abhyankar. Poona: Anandasrama, Third edition 1976, pp.1-9.

14. Bhāskararāya holds that realization of Brahman occurs only through *upāsana* on the deities and that this is a form of knowledge, not merely a kind of action. This is taken up in detail in Part One of the thesis.

Emend to **devatārūpasiddhavastubodhakā vedānta iti vācoktaḥ** following GOML.

15. Emend to **traividyādevatadupāsti** following Adyar and GOML.

16. Emend **prādhānyena devatāṃ** to **prādhānadevatam.**

17. The translation of the Verse like all others follows Bhāskararāya's interpretation, if one followed Upaniṣadbrahmayogin the translation would be quite different. For comparison:

> By Her empirical view there are three cities, three paths and [on the śrīcakra] in which the syllables a', ka' and tha' are inscribed, She presides.
>
> She is deathless, ancient, great and the principle cause of the greatness of the gods.

Following Rāmānanda still another interpretation:

> There are three cities, three paths; She is capable of moving in the wheel of the Universe in which there are fifty one letters inscribed in the form of 'a', 'ka' and 'tha' and [She] presides over these.
>
> She is without decay, without birth, great and cause of the greatness of the gods.

18. Discussion of the five types of liberation occurs in more detail in Bhāskararāya's commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma*, #625. See also *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhṛdaya* 2.2f. *Kaivalya* is give as a name of the Goddess Lalita in *Lalitāsahasranāma* #625, see Sastry translation, pp.252-253 (as listed in the bibliography).

19. Emend **tāsvādyantye** to **tāsvādyantau.**

20. Bhāskararāya quotes the same passage on *Lalitāsahasranāma* #625. Its location has not been ascertained in either recensions of the *Taittīriya Upaniṣad* or in *Taittīriya Brāhmaṇa*.

21. Bhāskararāya attributes these quotations to the third chapter of the *Visnupurāna* in all available manuscripts. The passages are, however, from the second chapter. See the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, 2.8.85 and 2.8.103.

22. What Bhāskararāya means is not clear and neither his reason for choosing this scriptural passage to illustrate his point.

The Agastya asterism is identified with Canopes. Vaiśvanara means the path the moon takes across the sky from horizon to horizon.

23. Emend **margatrividhyādgantavyāḥ** to **margatrividhyādaragantavyāḥ** following GOML.

24. Emend the whole sentence following GOML and Adyar to read: **īdṛsapuratrayavyapakatvāt purakatvāt tadrūpakatvāt vā paradevatā tripuretyucyate.** On the name of the Goddess Tripurā see *Lalitāsahasranāma* #626 with Bhāsakararāya's remarks.

25. This quotation has not been identified.

26. Emend **traipuraprāpteruktatvāt** to **deviprāpteruktatvāt** following both GOML and Adyar.

27. Emend **tripurā** to **saivatripathā** following Adyar.

The use of the three quotations beginning with the verses of the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* adds little to Bhāskararāya's argument and contributes to the ambiguity of the explanation. Given his usual care and erudition I suspect this whole passage might be an interpolation though no manuscripts support this opinion. Had Bhāskararāya skipped all three citations and added only, "**ayam... tu kaivalyanupabrahmapadapratiriti**" many doubts would be alleviated concerning the significance of scriptural references.

28. Katyāyana's *varttika* occurs under Pāṇini 2.4.17 and supports the interpretation of the compound as a *bahuvrīhi*. (Vasu in his translation places this *varttika* under 2.4.18 where it does not belong.) The idea is simple enough: when the word *paṭha* is joined with a numeral it can take a different set of gender endings in order to agree with the subject.

29. If Bhāskararāya has in mind the Vedic grammarian Yaska no statement to this effect can be found in his works. This does not preclude his referring to an oral interpretation.

30. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.2.3.

31. I have taken *sarvajanakam* to mean *sarvajananam* since it is clear that Bhāskararāya is referring to the initial creative role of Śakti as *icchā*, *kriyā* and *jñāna*. This is explained in Part One.

32. The second portion of the quotation is *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.6., the first portion is unidentified.

33. *Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.8.

34. According to oral traditions *śānta* is a technical term meaning supreme' or final' and is not used here in the usual sense of °peaceful'. See Bhāskararāya's remarks on *Lalitāsahasranāma* #141 and the *Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad* 6.19.

35. This is more elaborately explained in Part One. In summary, oral tradition explains that according to *mantraśāstra* a sound is classified into four aspects of emanation from its primordial source. These are called

parā, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*. The inherent nature is *considered* transcendent (*parā*) and unmanifest (*avyakta*) and so it is in a state of pre-articulated latency. As it begins the process of manifestation sound emerges in the *mūlādhara* cakra at the base of the spine in the human body, still unarticulated it is called *Paśyantī*. It travels up the subtle channel called the *suṣumnā* and at the *anahata* cakra located in the area of the heart it is called *madhyamā* and is still unarticulated. When it reaches the point of articulation just above the *anahata* cakra it is called *vaikharī*. For textual reference see *Yoginīhṛdaya*, I.36-40 with commentaries and Bhāskararāya on *Lalitāsaharanāma* #366, #368, #370 and #371.

36. Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī are the feminine consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively identified here with the three lines which make up the *trikoṇa* or innermost triangle of the *śrīcakra*. As the first triangle in the *śrīcakra* as it emanates from the central *bindu* (according to the *sṛṣṭi* or creation theory identifying the universe with the śrīcakra) these are the first three aspects of Brahman, the Absolute, to devolve. Hence they are identified with the first moments of dualistic consciousness, the first reflective awareness (*vimarśa*) of the 'I' as an entity among other entities. Brahman, initially one, projects these three powers of Creation, Maintenance and Destruction who are in turn responsible for the further projection of reality as it is understood through a knower, an object of knowledge and a process of knowing. They are also identical to the sound emanations of *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* as described in the previous note---the central bindu is identified with the *para* aspect of Brahman as sound (*śabdabrahman*). A complete explanation of the symbolism of the triangles within the *śrīcakra* is given in Part One.
See also *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.18-19, 22 and 36-40.

37. By *Nityahṛdaya* Bhāskararāya means the *Yoginīhṛdaya*. No other historical commentator or living adept is known to use this name, but it was clear to several who commented that this must be another name for the *Yoginīhṛdaya*. See *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.11, Kavirāj second edition, p.17; Ānandāśrama edition of *Vāmakeśvaratantra*, p.208.

Both the *Dīpikākara* Amṛtānanda and Bhāskararāya in the *Setubandha* (on *Vāmakeśvaratantra*) uphold the interpretation that the three Little Mothers (*mātṛkās*), as these three aspects of the Goddess are known, refer to the three primary evolutes of sound, that is, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* and that the °abode of universal waves' means the world construed through the thirty six *tattvas* or primary elements. See *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.11, Kavirāj second edition, p.17ff.

38. See Rāmeśvarasūri's *vṛtti* on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, 10.30 where the same verse of *Kālikāpurāṇa* is quoted. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra with Ramesvara's Commentary*, edited by A. Mahadeva Sastri, revised and enlarged by S. Y. Sastri Dave. Baroda: Oriental Institute, first edition 1923, second revised edition 1950, reprint 1979. (Gaekwad Oriental Series, No.22)

The reference here to *kuṇḍalinī śakti* is to the Goddess as the latent yogic power envisioned as a serpent coiled three times around the *mūlādhara* cakra of the human body. This and other yogic imagery is subject to discussion in Part One.

39. In Bhāskararāya's interpretation of the *mantraśāstra* there are forty-eight letters in the Sanskrit alphabet and these are directly linked to the devolution of Brahman from primordial sound. The vowels are counted as sixteen: a, a, i, i, u, u, r, r, l, l, e, o, ai, au, am (*anusvara*) and ah (*visarga*). The sixteen consonants counted not to include the first consonant **ka** are: ka, kha, ga, gha, na, ca, cha, ja, jha, na, ta, tha, da, dha, na, ta and tha. They are actually seventeen. The remaining consonants are the usual Sanskrit letters. Bhāskararāya's version is noteworthy because he clearly excludes la, the Vedic retroflex, kṣa (which he views as a compound of **ka** and **ṣa**) and ha (as a pure consonant considering it rather to be an extension of the *visarga*). According to living adepts this forty-eight letter version is the minority position and virtually all the ritual handbooks, including those of lineages claiming Bhāskararāya's inheritance, use the fifty-one letter alphabet in their *mantraśāstra*. The proponents of the forty-eight letter view observe that this number allows one to divide the total into three sets of sixteen which are esoterically "condensed" in the three kūṭas or lines that make up the sixteen letter *śrīvidya* mantra. The proponents of the fifty-one letter view hold that the 'extra' three letters fit nicely into the pattern of threes that pervade the symbolism of Tripurasundarī---as Bhāskararāya notes himself above in the text.

40. An identical illustration is used in the Kashmiri *Pratyabhijñahṛdaya* of Kṣemarāja to argue the simultaneous existence of Śiva and Śakti in both latent and realized forms of the universe. See sūtra four where it says, **yathā ca evaṃ bhagavān viśvaśarīram tathā citisankocātmā saṃkucitaviirūpaḥ, cotano' grāhako'pi vatadhānikāvat saṃkucitāseaviśvarūpaḥ/tathā ca siddhāntavacanaṃ//.**

41. Another explanation of why "ha" is not counted separately is that it is a mere reflection, a *vimarśa*, of the pure illumination, the *prakāśa*, seen in the letter "a". Cf., *Pratybhijñahṛdaya*, 1 and *vṛtti*.

42. The verse is unidentified. It is likely to be from a Tantra.

43. Bhāskararāya on *Yoginīhṛdaya*, I. 11, quotes this half verse as *Saṅketapaddhati*. This text has yet to be discovered in manuscript. In his introductory remarks to the *Vāmakeśvaratantra* in his *Setubandha*, Bhāskararāya quotes the full verse but with no textual reference. (See p.13 of Anandāśrama edition.) This agrees with Amṛtānanda's half-verse quotation which also occurs on *Yoginīhṛdaya*, I. 11 leading us to suspect that Bhāskararāya may have had the Dīpikākara in mind. Amṛtānanda quotes this half-verse again at *Yoginīhṛdaya*, II.63cd-64ab. The full verse as it appears in Bhāskararaya reads: **akāraḥ sarvavarṇāgrayaḥ prakāśaḥ paramaḥ śivaḥ/ hakāro'ntyaḥ kalārūpo vimarśākhyaḥ prakīrtitaḥ//.**

Note that the following line in the text, **eta eva mātṛkaḥ**, is redundant and is omitted following GOML and Adyar.

44. *Sūtasaṁhitā*, 4.47.64.

45. The line **aksarādipadadvaye jaso dādeśāndasaḥ** follows directly and while it appears to make a grammatical remark it seems to explain little and appears out of context. It occurs in all the manuscripts reviewed but has been omitted from the translation. Oral tradition among living adepts adds little on this curious remark and no interpretation proffered appeared to justify its inclusion. Several adepts suggested that it could well be an interpolation but no evidence substantiates this claim.

46. Emend to omit **tri-** in **tribindurūpāṃ** following Adyar.

47. This *varttika* has not been located.

48. The idea is that since *anusthāya* in the Verse is in a non-finite form two alternatives appear to Bhāskararāya as viable, either '*asti*', 'it is', should be supplied or the action indicated by *anusthāya* is to be completed in some later Verse. The former is likely to be more acceptable to both the sense of the Verse and to Bhāskararāya's interpretation.

49. Bhāskararāya is dissatisfied with usual sense of *ajarā* (the alpha-privative '*a*' plus *jara*) as without decay or old age' and interprets the *Dhātupāda*'s listing to suggest further that the Goddess is not only 'without decay' but has completely conquered death.

50. Bhāskararāya shows his true colors here by placing Śakti even above Śiva, a point that other Śāktas hesitate to make so explicitly since they are themselves outwardly

Śaivite in the broadest sense. The name Rudra subordinated to Śakti may well be tolerated in Śaiva-Śākta circles but not Śiva. Several living adepts made a point of this subtle suggestion by remarking that in the final analysis Śiva and Śakti must be considered identical and equal: a point Bhāskararāya makes at the very end of the commentary.

Emend **atiprasiddhānāṃ** to **nāmnā prasiddhānāṃ** following GOML and Adyar.

51. Emend **tadrūpā** to **tadrūpā ca** following GOML and Adyar.

52. Bhāskararāya implies that each aspect of a deity has a separate *vidyā*, that is, both a science or method of worship and a distinct mantra (also a meaning of *vidyā*). He also seems to suggest a kind of hierarchy beginning with Śakti, followed by Śiva, Viṣṇu and the rest. Note also that he calls the text here only *Tripuropanisad*, omitting the *mahā* adjective as do other commentators usually (cf., Rāmānanda and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin). On special significance of the term *upāsana* and its related forms see Part One.

53. This passage has not been located in the *Padmapurāna* but Bhāskararāya quotes it again under *Lalitāsahasranāma* #231 as coming from this source.

54. Emend **pratimābhedānāṃ** to **ambāpratimābhedānāṃ**.

55. Bhāskararāya is further suggesting that all other deities are but beggars in comparison to Śakti. Worshipping other deities will bring one only to a certain level of accomplishment, that is, confer only a certain degree of wealth, like begging from a beggar limits one to certain ends. Worshipping Śakti, however, places no limits on the possibilities. This is according to living oral tradition. This is quoted by Bhāskararāya under **Lalitāsahasranāma** #64.

56. Bhāskararāya quotes the same verse under *Lalitāsahasranāma* #297 but there calls his work the **Śivastava**. Nothing more is known about this work since it has never been recovered. The proverb cited above in Note 54 also occurs again here.

On the forms of the Vedic rituals mentioned in the verse see Keith, A.B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanisads*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925, pp.326-339. (Volumes 31 and 32 of the Harvard Oriental Series)

57. Emend **viśeṣyatābhiprayena** to **viśeṣyatvābhiprayena** following Adyar.

58. *Atharva Veda*, 10.22.1-2. Bhāskararāya in the *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhrdaya*, 1.6. quotes the same passage and suggests that it belongs to both the *saunakaśākha* of the *Atharva Veda* and the *taittirīyaśākha* of the *Yajur Veda*. The Yajurvedins read the epithet, he says, in the nominative case. Regarding the *saunakaśākha* of the *Atharva Veda* and recensions of this text see Winternitz (as cited above) in *History of Indian Literature*, p.120 and p.120 ftn.2; on the *taittirīyaśākha* of the *Yajur Veda* see Winternitz, pp.169-170.

Emend **traysre** to **tryare**; also read **tasminyad-yakṣamāt manvattadaivabrahmaviduḥ** following GOML, Adyar and as cited in *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.6.

59. Emend **tadartha** to **taduktaṃ** and read **brahmavida eva viduḥ nānya iti.** Cf., *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.1-6.

60. The primary sense of the nine *Yonis* is their identification with the *yoginis* or subsidiary deities of Śakti placed on the sub-cakras of the *Śrīcakra* in the course of Śrīvidyā *pūjā*. These nine sets of *yoginīs* called *navayoni* preside over the nine sub-cakras.

Emend to add **navayonīti** following Adyar.

[VERSE TWO]

> [She creates] the nine *yonis* and the nine cakras; joined together [to form these] nine [cakras, there are] nine *yoginīs* [presiding over each of the cakras].
>
> [There are] presiding female deities over [each of the] nine cakras. *Syona* [the Goddess presiding over the cakras is the cause of happiness]. There are nine gestures (*mudrās*) and nine *bhadrās* for each place (*mahīnām*) on the cakra.[1]

Even though the *bindu cakra* [in the center of the *śrīcakra*, is only one point] because it has a three-fold nature, each respectively has three forms.[2] [The verb *dīdhire* as it occurs in Verse Two is defined] according to the sutra, "Before the Imperative affix *hi*, *sa* is substituted for *sas*" [Pāṇini, 6.4.35], takes this form by virtue of its being a Vedic root.[3] *Dīpanam*, light, [which defines the verbal root of *dīdhire*] means illumination [*prakāśa*] but in this context the meaning intended is creating (*utpādanam*).[4] The three deities created [and] not different from [Her supreme] peaceful (*śānta*) [aspect] are [the three *śaktis* of creation] *Icchāśakti* [the *sakti* of desire], *Jñānaśakti* [the *śakti* of knowledge] and *Kriyāśakti* [the *śakti* of action]. The female deities (*śakti*) by name Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī [which correspond to the *Iccha-*, *Kriyā-* and *Jñāna-śaktis* are complimented] by the three [corresponding male] forms Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are created not different from [Her supreme subsuming aspect called] Ambikā. The [corresponding] deities of speech

(*vāgdevatā*) called Paśyantī, Madhyamā and Vaikharī are created not different from [Her aspect as stage of sound called] Supreme (*parā*). This is the meaning [of the threefold nature of the *bindu* *cakra* divided respectively in three ways].[5]

Alternatively [it may be interpreted that it was] only the Supreme Goddess, presiding over the Three Cities, who created the nine *Yonis*.[6] [One] suggestive meaning is that these nine deities alone have been transformed into the nine *Yonis* [and] cakras.

Furthermore, there are the nine cakras [forming the sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra*] beginning with [the one called] *trailokyamohana* in which there are the nine *Yonis* whose nature are the latent mental impressions (*samskaratmana*); some of these [latent impressions] already exist, others are still potential. These are called [in Verse Two] the nine cakras (*navacakrani*) or the agents [of creation, so the verse says] *navayonidīdhire*, She creates the nine *Yonis*. The nine *Yoni* cakras [if taken in the sense of being the central *trikoṇa* plus the minor eight triangles of the *vasukoṇa* cakra] arise [from the intersection of] the two [major] Sakti triangles with one [major] Vahni [or Siva] triangle.[7] The three lines of each [major] triangle thus joined together are the nine lines and [produce by their intersection] the forms of angles [which number] only nine.[8] Therefore, [it can be said that] She produces the nine

yoginīs [identified respectively with each of the eight minor triangles which comprise the *vasukoṇa* sub-cakra and the inner triangle sub-cakra called *trikoṇa*]. The sense expressed here is that in these nine [sub-] cakras [composed of the eight *vasukoṇa* triangles plus the one inner *trikona* are [subtlely present] the nine [sets of] *yoginīs* beginning with *prakaṭa* [that is, *all* the *yoginīs* of the *śrīcakra*] and that these [sets of *yoginīs*] are present here in the form of angles.[9]

> Above that [space and time] is the Supreme, the Great, not different from space and time.[10]

With sayings such as this [is conveyed] the conventional expression of the expansion (*prapañca*) [of the *śrīcakra*] beginning with the *bindu* cakra and [insofar as it is] not distinct from space, etc., [ultimately nor] below [the level] of Brahman [in descending stages].[11] Based on this [view of the expansion of the *bindu* cakra] is the extended [three-dimensional figure] of the Meru [*śrīcakra*]. Therefore in this one [Meru] cakra beginning with [the outermost sub-cakra, the] *bhūpura* and ending with the *bindu* are nine levels (*bhūmika*), one above the other.[12]

Presiding over these [nine levels are the deities] called *Tripuracakreśvarī* [that is, the Goddesses of the cakra of the Three Cities which are] nine only [in number].[13] Those [nine presiding deities] in their subtle

forms are respectively established in the nine *Yonis*; and the presiding female deities (*adhinātha*) over the places (*mahīmān*) on the nine cakras are the agents (*kartrya*) that create (*dīdhire*) the nine *Yonis* [as it is stated in Verse Two].

Syona is an epithet of the Goddess of the [*śrī*-] cakra. The meaning is that [She] is the cause of happiness (*sukha*) [following the Vedic interpretation of the word].[14]

The nine gestures (*mudrās*) [associated with each of the nine sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra* respectively] are those beginning with [the one called] *sarvasamkṣobhini* and ending with *sarvayoni*.[15] These are also established here [in Verse Two]. The nine auspcious ones (*bhadrās*) [subsequently mentioned in the verse] are elaborated in the [*Vāmakeśvara*] Tantra as,

> Dharma, adharma and the Souls; that which measures, what is measured and also the measure.[16]

The meaning is [that these] nine [respectively reflect] merit, sin, the Self (*ātman*), the inner Self (*antarātman*), the Supreme Self (*paramātman*), the knowledge Self (*jñanātman*), the measurer (*pramāta*), the measured (*prameya*) and the measure (*pramā*). An elaboration on the four-fold nature of the Self is to be seen in the *Ātmanopaniṣad*:

> The cakra is nine-fold and the cakras are divided nine-fold.[17]

Or by the word "auspcious" (*bhadrā*) [as it occurs in

Verse Two] is to be understood the mantras. According to some they [the nine bhadrās] refer to the mantras of the Goddesses presiding over the nine cakras.[18] From the proximity [of their relationship in the śrīcakra pūjā] it is appropriate to understand [that what is referred to by the nine bhadrās are] the mantras of the [nine] gestures (mudrās).

The essence of the meaning is that the entire śrīcakra in its subtle form is present in the cakra [insofar as it is viewed from the perspective of dissolution consisting of the three-fold form of the [central] bindu, the [central triangle called the] trikoṇa and the [inner eight minor triangles comprising] the vasukoṇa cakras.[19] In the summarized form of the [śrīcakra] pūjā, at the time of emergency (āpatkālika) we understand from the Tantras an injunction [to perform the pūjā] merely beginning from the vasukoṇa [cakra consisting of the eight minor triangles] to the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra].[20] This is the scriptural authority (śruti) for that [method of performing the pūjā]. Here all the supporting references mentioned in the Tantras and Puranas ar not stated for fear of [unnecessarily] expanding [this commentary].[21]

Now the third verse beginning with the words, "She is one" is stated in order to indicate the [śrī-] cakra [from the point of view of its being] established in the form of two sets of ten triangles and the manvaśra [cakra, that is,

the sub-cakra consisting of fourteen minor triangles].

[VERSE THREE]

> Originally She was one, She became nine, She became nineteen and them twenty-nine. Then [She became] forty- three. [She is] shining intensely, as if desirous. Let the Mothers [identified with the forty-three yoginīs placed on the minor triangles of the śrīcakra] enter into me [through the process of nyāsa and mantras].[22]

The nine Yonis [consist of the] five subtle elements (sukṣmabhūta) and five physical elements (sthūlabhūta) thus there are ten elements.[23] By dividing these physical and subtle [elements] arise the ten mere-essences (tanmātras) beginning with sound. And from these [ten mere-essences] arose the fourteen, namely, the five organs of action, the five organs of knowledge and the four inner organs.[24] All these deities are feminine forms in the form of Yonis (literally, wombs) [meaning having the shape of triangles within the śrīcakra]. All this has been elaborated in the Tantra beginning with the verse:

> The two sets of ten [minor] triangles [within the śrīcakra] have a shining form (sphuratrūpa) which depends upon illumination (prakāśa) [of the] ten elements and the ten mere-essences.[25]

The same process [of interidentification between the Yonis and other aspects] as in the earlier case [of Verse Two] is also instructed here [in Verse Three].

She who [in Verse Three] is [called] the first (prathama) is the deity who is the cause of the whole

universe. She was prior to [creation] only one in the form of the *bindu* cakra [of the *śrīcakra*]; then She became nine [as the verse says] with the nature (*ātmaṇā*) of nine *Yonis*. Then [as it is said in Verse Three] She became nineteen in the form of the nine *Yonis* [identified with the one inner *trikoṇa* triangle plus the eight minor triangles of the *vasukoṇa*] and the ten inner *Yonis* [of the inner ten minor triangles].

The [grammatical] forms of *viṃśat* [literally meaning twenty, as they occur in the Verse] are Vedic.

Then [it is stated in the Verse] She became twenty-nine by adding the outer ten *Yonis* [identified with the outer ten minor triangles within the *śrīcakra*]. She then became forty-three [by adding to twenty-nine] the fourteen [minor triangles] previously [mentioned above]. The meaning is that the Goddess in Her own-form became the forty-three *Yonis* [identified with the forty-three minor triangles within the *śrīcakra*].[26] Because the *bindu* cakra is formless, when it is said "She is One", [the *bindu* cakra] is not counted among the [forty-three] *yoginīs* [identified with the forty-three minor triangles of the *śrīcakra*].[27] [The word] shining (*samidhā*) meaning shining intensely (*dedīpyamānā*) refers to these [forty-three *yoginīs* identified with the] mothers. [When the Verse says] "Let them enter into me" the prayer of the Poet [author] is "Let them enter into my body because it is of the form of the

śrīcakra'.[28]

[When in Verse Three it says] "as if desiring" (*uśatīva*) it means "as it were desirious of" (*kāmayamānā iva*) but in fact She is without desire (*niṣkāmatvāt*). Just as cows desiring to be near their calves enter quickly into the cowshed, so let these [Mothers (*matara*), that is, the forty-three *yoginīs*] enter [into me]: this is the meaning.[29] This scriptural authority (*śruti*) [stating in Verse Three, "Let the Mothers enter into me"] is the source (*mūlam*) for the injunctions concerning the *nyāsa* of the [*śri-*] cakra as established in the Tantras.[30] Because of the necessity to identify these [forty-three] female deities on the [various parts of the] body [through the process of *nyāsa*], it is said,

> Let all those *yoginīs* make my body their home.[31]

This is the source of this [interidentification between the body and the *śrīcakra*] describing the "laying down of the Goddess" (*śaktinyāsa*) [in the body] and based upon the form of a mantra (*śaktinyāsamantraliṅgasamvādāttasyāpi mūlam*).

Now in order to indicate the two [sets of] lotus [petals] encircled by three lines on the remaining portion of the [*sri-*] cakra [as it is viewed from the perspective] of creation, the fourth verse is said.

1. The verse translated according to the interpretation of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin would read: "In whom there are nine *Yonis* and nine cakras and nine disciplines (*yogas*) and nine *Yoginis* are shining. In the nine basic levels (*bhumis*) there are the presiding deities of the cakras who are the guardian deities (*syona*), the nine *Badhras* and the nine mudrās."

According to Rāmānanda: "The nine *Yonis* and the nine cakras are shining; there are nine conjunctions (*yogas*) and nine *Yoginīs* [presiding]; there are nine presiding deities of the cakra; [the presiding deity of the cakra] *syona* means 'of the form of happiness'; there are nine *mudrās* and nine *bhadrās*."

For an alternative translation according to Upaniṣadbrahmayogin see Krishna-Warrier as mentioned above.

2. The threefold nature of the *bindu* is technically described in terms of its three primary qualities, *nāda*, *bindu* and *kalā*. *Nāda* refers to sound in its primordial sense, that is, the first unarticulated essense that preceeds the three stages of speech. It is the same as the *parā* aspect that subsumes the usual three forms of sound, namely, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*. Insofar as Brahman is considered in its sound form (*śabdabrahman*), *nāda* is the term designating its latent potentiality, that is, its power to become increasingly more manifest. The second quality, *bindu*, indicates a technical use of the term. Like many Tantric terms, *bindu* is used in a variety of contexts to indicate very different types of forms or properties. (Regarding these usages see *Hindu Tantrism*, p.94f.) In this case *bindu* refers to the correlative concept *nāda*, it is the static or permanent element that underlies the emerging form of manifest sound. It is, as were, a "drop" (as its literal sense indicates) of concentrated power that forms the basis of the expansion (*prapañca*) that assumes the physical shape of sounds and the *bījākṣaras* of the *śrīcakra*. *Kalā* is the third aspect of the *śrīcakra's* central *bindu*. It refers to the power of particularization, that is, the inherent capacity of the One to assume many forms.

3. See Pāṇini's enumeration of the fourth verbal root given under 6.4.35.

4. An idea repeated by Bhāskararāya in his *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhṛdaya* I.12-13; cf., Amṛtānanda's *Dīpikā* on the same verses.

5. The detailed explanation of the *icchā-*, *kriyā-* and *jñāna-śaktis* is given in Part One but of immediate importance here is Bhāskararāya's effort to align the different sets of three that are part of the symbolism and meaning of the Goddess as Tripura, The Three Cities. *Icchā-*, *kriyā-* and *jñāna- śaktis* correspond respectively to Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī as well as to *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* aspects of sound. Note however that in the next line of the text there is no mention of what corresponding male powers created Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra. The chart below

maps out the interidentifications made here.

Icchāśakti
Śānta aspects---- Kṛiyāśakti
Jñanaśakti

Vāmā
Bindu------------------ Ambikā aspects----Jyeṣṭhā
(with its presiding deities) Raudrī

paśyantī
Parā aspects----- madhyamā
vaikharī

The devolution of the universe envisioned from the *bindu* of the *śrīcakra* appears in the sets of three as shown above. Each of these correspond to a side of the inner *trikona* sub-cakra, that is, to the right, top and left sides of the first triangle from the *bindu* of the *śrīcakra*. By °nine deities' transformed into the nine *Yoni* cakras Bhaskararaya means the nine in the three sets of three as in the chart above. As for which deity is identified with which sub-cakra of the *śrīcakra* he offers no correspondence. Sometimes Bhaskararaya suggests that devolution of the *śrīcakra* from *bindu* to nine entities corresponds to the central *trikona* and the eight minor triangles of the *vasukona* cakra---following this line of interpretation these would be the nine cakras which are transformations of the nine *Yonis*, each of which is one of the nine deities as listed.

Note that the word *cakre* in this line of the text is the 3rd person singular, *ātmanepada* of √*kṛ*.

6. The alternative explanation suggests that the Goddess creates (taking *dīdhire* in the sense of *ut*+√*pad*) the nine *Yonis* as latent and realized impressions in the aspirant and corresponding to the set of nine *Yoginīs* that preside over the nine cakras. It is with these nine *Yonis* (as mental impressions) that the actual nine sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra* are identified and taken to be agents initiating action.

7. Bhāskararāya means the nine deities transformed into the nine *Yonis* are identified with the nine triangles formed by the intersection of the two *sakti*, downward facing triangles, with the one *śiva*, upward facing triangle (what he calls the *Vahni* triangle). This intersection of three triangles produces the *vasukona* of eight minor triangles plus the central *trikoṇa*. The emerging portion of the *śrīcakra* is as below.

What Bhāskararāya means exactly by the nine *Yonis* throughout this discussion is never explicit but what is suggested is the power behind or within each manifestation of reality represented

by the emerging triangles. These are, in fact, aspects of the devolving supreme deity and are called *Yonis* by virtue of they're being triangular.

8. As shown in the diagram in note .

9. Bhāskararāya makes it clear that the remaining portions of the *śrīcakra* are all contained in a subtle form within these nine minor triangles created out of the initial intersection of the two major triangles as shown in note . He says first there was the undifferentiated in the form of the one *bindu*; subtly present was the central *trikona* and only then the *nine* minor triangles formed by the intersection of two plus one. All the remaining *yoginīs* identified with each set of minor triangles, he says, are present within these nine minor triangles, as are each of the *yoginīs* identified with each *set* of minor triangles that are the sub-cakras of the *śrīcakra*.

10. *Yoginīhṛdaya*, I. 36. With this quotation begins a different subject, the description of the *śrīcakra* in its three dimensional *meru* form.

11. The idea is that not only is everything below the level of Brahman but that things are arranged in a specific order of devolution corresponding to the *śrīcakra*. Thus Brahman identified with the *bindu* becomes the *trikoṇa* which in turn becomes the *vasukoṇa* and so forth.

12. See Part One for a discussion of the different forms and configurations of the *śrīcakra*.
Read a full stop in the text following "*bhūmikaḥ*".

13. These are the presiding deities of the *trikoṇa*. They are identical to the nine presiding deities over the nine sub-cakras of the *sricakra*, namely, *tripurā*, *tripureśī*, *tripurasundarī*, *tripuravāsinī*, *tripuraśrī*, *tripuramālinī*, *tripurasiddhā*, *tripurāmbikā* and *mahātripurasundarī*. The list proceeds from the outermost sub-cakra, the *trailokyamohana* consisting of the *bhugraha* (i.e., the *bhūpura*), and moves towards the *trikoṇa*. For a complete list of the identifications and names of the cakras see Part One.
Here ends the discussion in the text of the *meru* form of the *śrīcakra*.

14. Literally the word "syona" means soft, gentle or agreeable and appears to be of doubtful origins. Bhāskararāya's interpretation suggesting that it is a Vedic term is corroborated by contemporary oral traditions.

15. For a description of the nine principle *mudrās* and others see Part One.

23. The five physical or gross (*sthūla*) elements (*bhūtas*) are air (*vāyu*), water (*āp*), earth (*pṛthvi*), fire (*agni*) and space (*ākāśa*). The five subtle elements, however, are less clear. One plausible interpretation is maintained in contemporary oral traditions since there is no textual reference listing these---that is, that the five subtle elements are the corresponding subtle mantric emenations of the gross elements. This makes sense since the Goddess is spoken of in gross and subtle forms corresponding respectively to the anthropomorphic or visible shape and the 'subtle' mantra. What this means in these contexts is that it is the combination of the mantric seed-syllable identified as the subtle element with the gross element itself that brings about the *tanmātras* or °mere essences'. These °mere essences' are themselves, it would appear, in subtle and gross forms, that is as ordinary forms and as corresponding mantric aspects. The gross elements correspond to the gross *tanmātras* as follows:

space/*ākāśa* = sound/*śabda*
air/*vāyu* = touch/*sparśa*
fire/*agni* = form/*rūpa*
water/*āp* = taste/*rasa*
earth/*pṛthvi* = smell/*gandha*

24. Here there can be little doubt what Bhāskararāya means. The organs of action (*karmendriyas*) are the legs, larynx, feet, hands and sexual organ, while the organs of knowledge (*jñānendriyas*) are the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. The four inner organs (*antahkaraṇa*) the mind (*manas*), judgement (*buddhi*), intellect (*citta*) and ego (*ahaṃkāra*). These lists are shared by virtually all classical Hindus while the interpretation of each differs according to school.

Emend abhavat to ajayanta following Adyar and GOML.

25. *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.16. What Bhāskararāya intends here is to identify the *śrīcakra*'s inner ten minor triangles with the ten gross (physical) and subtle elements, the outer ten minor triangles with the ten *tanmātras* or mere essences' and the fourteen triangles of the *manvaśra* (sub-) cakra with the organs of action and knowledge plus the four inner organs (as described above).

26. For Bhāskararāya the creation of the universe as the *śrīcakra* proceeds by an expansion up to the fourteen minor triangles of the *manvaśra* sub-cakra, that is, the one *bindu* becomes nine as the *trikona* plus the eight minor triangles of the *vasukoṇa*; after this comes the two sets of ten minor triangles bringing the total, as he says, to twenty-nine. To these are added the outermost set of fourteen minor triangles; it is these "previously mentioned fourteen" that are identified with the five respective organs of action and knowledge and the four parts of the inner organ (*antahakaraṇa*) as mentioned above. The whole act of creation is, however, in microcosm found in the first

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expansion to nine, the subsequent description is a mere elaboration in his eyes. What is important is the fact that the remaining portions of the śrīcakra, that is, the sets of lotus petals and the sets of lines are not included in the description thus far. Their respective roles are given later.

27. Bhāskararāya discounts the **bindu** in his calculation of the presiding deities of the śrīcakra once it expands beyond its original form. He calls the **bindu** "formless" (**nirākāra**) since it has not moved into the realm of 'threes' that make up reality as we understand it ordinarily. This interpretation brings the total number of presiding deities (**yoginīs**) identified with the minor triangles to the correct number, forty-three.
Emend to read: **binducakrasyanirākāratvena ekā sāsīd ityasya yonyākṛtīnām madhye na parigaṇanam//.** This follows both Adyar and GOML in part. See the critical text and apparatus for details.

28. The 'mothers' (mātṛkās) are the yoginīs of the forty-three minor triangles of the śrīcakra.

29. Bhāskararāya has in mind the Indian belief that the cows having grazed during the day are by evening anxious to be with their young and hasten themselves back to the cowshed. The simile suggests the anxiety feeling of separated from the Mother and the hope of the devotee that the yoginīs will hasten into him during the time of puja.

30. Nyāsa, literally, "laying down", refers to the process of identification of sounds with parts of the body and the sricakra as part of the contemplative worship. See Hindu Tantrism, p.136f. for a detailed discussion of its significance in Tantric traditions.

31. This verse remains unidentified.

[VERSE FOUR]

> [There is] an upward rising flame in the midst of a circle of light which is [also] darkness itself. There is a horizontal [circle of] light that is red and is without decay.
>
> [She is] joy [and the] bliss [of purity] and indeed these [three] circles of radiating light [surrounding the sets of lotus petals of the *srīcakra*] make auspcious [the Mothers identified with it].[1]

Following the [sub-cakra] of fourteen [minor triangles] there are two [sub-] cakras of eight and sixteen lotus petals. In between each is a circle and exterior [to the sixteen petals] there is a circle; thus [there are] three circles. This is the conclusion reached in some Tantras.[2] Hence [there is the verse]:

> The four gateways (*caṭuskoṇa*) are of the form of Jyeṣṭhā and the three circles the form of Vama.[3]

Thus the explanation given by the ancient teachers of the words "the three circles" defined as two lotus [petal cakras] surrounded by three circles between them is appropriate.[4]

> The two groups of lotus petals surrounded by three circles have the nature of Agni and Soma according to the Sāktas, My Beloved.[5]

The explanation [that was given above for the four gateways and the three circles] is the same for this verse. "These three circles that have the three-fold form, the form of Agni, Sūrya and Soma": By the explanation given in this sense is to be understood the two lotus [petal sets] between which are the [three circles].[6] But the literal meaning is

that surrounding the cakras which follow the maintaining cakra [i.e., the final set of fourteen minor triangles] is a circle of light called jvalana, flame, [and this flame] has the nature of darkness [as it says in Verse Four described by the words] "darkness indeed" (tamo vai). By the [expression in the Verse] "upward rising flame" (ūrdhvajvala) is asserted that the form is a flame of fire (agnijvala). And it is further asserted to be a form of darkness (tamorūpatva) by the appearance of soot [arising at] the top of the flame.[7] Thus the indeclinable particle vai, indeed, is used [in the Verse] in order to avoid any doubt concerning the mention of darkness as being incongruous with its composition as light.[8]

Following that there is [explained in the Verse so as to indicate the form of the sun (sūryarūpa)] a horizontal (tiraścīnam) circle of light moving horizontally.[9] Because it is red in color, it has the quality of activity (raktatvādrajoguṇamābhūt) and that [circle of horizontal light] has the form of the sun. It is a matter of [ordinary] perception that sunlight travels horizontally and fire vertically.[10] It has been eloquently said:

> It is well known that the sun's light (anurusāratha) spreads horizontally and the fire moves vertically.[11]

The ephithet "without decay" (ajaram) [used in Verse Four to indicate the agnirūpa or form of fire] asserts the peculiar nature of a flame of fire.[12]

There then arises pleasure from the contact of subject

with object [called in Verse Four *modana* to indicate the form of the moon (*somarūpa*)] which arises as the circle of light around the moon. By the word "bliss" (*ānanda*) [in the Verse] the nature of its being pure is indicated. What is suggested is [not ordinary happiness but] the bliss of Brahman since there occurs an excess of purity.[13]

The [particles] *u* and *vai* [are used in the Verse] to indicate a mere vocative expression (*kevalamantrane*) and to add emphasis.[14]

Thus these three *maṇḍalas* or circles (*vṛttāni*) [that surround parts of the *śrīcakra*] cause auspciousness, that is, [as the Verse says] they ornament (*mandayanti*) the Mothers [who are identified on the parts of the *śrīcakra*]. The meaning [of this passage] is that the *Śrīcakra* that is fit for worship (*karyakṣama*) should consist of the two sets of lotus petals between which are the three circles, not merely [a *śrīcakra* consisting of the major and minor triangles beginning with the *bindu*] up to the *manvaśra* [cakra, that is the sub-cakra of fourteen minor triangles]. The sense is [also] that the worship (*pūjā*) done from the *manvaśra* [cakra] up to the *bindu* is only for emergencies.

In order to instruct the nature of the nine gateways of the [śrī-] cakra the fifth verse is said.

[VERSE FIVE]

> [The *śrīcakra* is composed also of] the three lines of the outer gateways; it is the three worlds, [has the form of] the three qualities and the three illuminations.
>
> This is the city [of the Goddess]. It increases the fulfillment of those [devotees

seeking] fulfillment. It is Śiva (*Madana*) and the Goddess [as *Madanyā*].

In other Tantras the three circles are prescribed to be exterior to the two [sets of] lotus petals surrounded by two circles.[15] If that is the case then one should interpret the verse up to the words "And three lines" (*tisraśca rekha*) as referring to the three circles. And thus it should not be said that it is incongruous to mention the three circles as being outside the two circles [that surround the outermost set of lotus petals]. In the *Tantrarāja* [*Tantra*], taking what is stated in scripture (*śruti*) as its source, it is said that outside the *manvaśra* [sub-cakra of fourteen minor triangles] is another bordering circle different from the circle surrounding the eight petalled lotus.[16] To take the three lines [mentioned here in Verse Five] as referring to "the outermost gateways" [subsequently mentioned] is the natural meaning.[17]

[The words in Verse Five] "three worlds" (*trivisthapā*) means having the form of the three worlds (*bhūvanātrayarūpa*).[18] Or [*viṣṭhapā*, world] may mean the form of heaven (*svargarūpa*) because of its being the abode of the gods. The "three qualities" (*triguṇa*) means having the form of the three qualities. "Three illuminations" (*triprakāśa*) means the light in the form of three circles representing the Sun (*sūrya*), the Moon (*candra*) and Fire (*agni*). With the word "this" [in the Verse] is concluded the discussion of the *śrīcakra*.

By these four and a half verses are described the city, like that city of the Goddess (*śripura*) which is [identified as] the *śrīcakra*, the dwelling place of the Supreme Goddess together with Her attendents. [The *śrīcakra*] fulfills the wishes of the devotees and even the gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu and others. Hence the meaning is that on the *śrīcakra* are *Madana* [as He is called in Verse Five] who is Śiva or Kāmeśvara and *Madanyā* [as She is called in the Verse] who is Śivakāmasundarī [the Goddess as consort to Naṭarāja]. They are present shining by their own lustre in the extended forms [of the powers] of *ānima*, etc.[19]

Or [the word *madanya* in the Verse] can be split as "*madani*" plus "*a*". Long *ī* final is added to [some] masculine words; thus it should be construed as *āprathete*. This follows from [Panini's rules].[20] In the Vedas these *gati* and *upasarga* are employed indifferently after the verbal root as well as before it, and are also seen separated from the verb by intervening words.

In order to indicate that the different names occuring in various places in the Puranas and Tantras all describe the forms of the Goddess, the sixth verse beginning with the words, *madantika*", is said.[21]

[VERSE SIX]

> [The Goddess] is differently known as the Joyous, the Proud, the Auspcious and the Prosperous. And She is the Beautiful and the Pure One; the Modest, the Intelligent, the Satisfied, the Desired, the Thriving, the Wealthy, Lalitā [the Lovely].

In the *Padmapurāṇa* in the contexts of enumerating the places of pilgrimage of the Goddess (*devītīrtha*) some [of Her] forms are mentioned:

> Devī is Lalitā in Prayāg; in Laṅkā She is called Maṅgalā; in Trikūṭi Bhadrasundarī. In Karavīra She is Mahālakṣmī; similarly in Vinayaka She is Devī; in Devadāruvana She is Pusṭhi, in Kashmir region She is Medhā while [also] Vateśvari and Tuṣṭhi.[22]

These and other forms are in various places.

The fourteen names [listed in Verse Six] beginning with *Mandantikā* are inclusive of *Viśālākṣī* [the Goddess] in Kasi and other deities. Whatever form of a particular Goddess appears, even if it is differently known, is in reality only Her [the Supreme Śakti].

The word *lālapantī* [as it occurs in Verse Six] has the meaning *lālapyamāna*, [that is,] "differently known".[23] [*Lālapanti*] is used in the *Sābarabhāṣya* [on the *Mīmāṁsakasūtras*] where it says, "A case ending added to a word not yet declined has the meaning of the yet to be declined word in special instances."[24] Otherwise [if *lālapantī* is read as a substantive rather than as a verb] these fifteen goddesses correspond to the fifteen syllables [of the *śrīvidyā* mantra]. The Ātharvaṇa school reads here "*siddhimata*" for "*śuddhimata*".[25]

The seventh verse is said in order to effect the contemplative worship of the extolled Goddess.

1. Emend **maṇḍalayanti** in the Verse to **mandayanti** correcting the printing error in the Avalon text.

2. Read **katipayatantrasiddhāntaḥ** following GOML. Here Bhāskararāya makes clear that the *vṛttatraya*, or three lines, round on the *śrīcakra* are not to be placed outside the sixteen petalled lotus as it usually appears. Instead he says the three lines occur inbetween the sets of sub-cakras. Regarding the different opinions concerning the construction of the *śrīcakra* see Part One; in regard to the tradition of Bhāskararāya and the interpretation of this particular point of doctrine in living traditions see Part Two.

3. *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.19. Bhāskararāya here shifts to an explanation of the *śrīcakra* from the outer gateways of the *bhūgraha* towards the *central bindu*. Amṛtānanda observes in his *Dīpikā* on this verse a reading which shifts the word order thus making discussion consistent with the 'inside out' explanation but does not adopt it.

4. The "ancient teaching" is reflected in the opinion of Amṛtānanda in his *Dīpikā* on *Yoginīhṛdaya* 1.19.

5. This verse has not been identified. Bhāskararāya seems to stretch the meaning of the verse since its more natural interpretation would identify the two sets of eight and sixteen lotus petals of the *śrīcakra* with Soma and Agni. Bhāskararāya, however, takes it as referring to the three circles, not the lotus petals, and adds the identification of the third line with Sūrya. Because the verse has not been located it is difficult to assess Bhāskararāya's interpretation.

6. Emend **vṛttānyanisūryasomaguṇa-** to **vṛttanayagnisūryasomarūpa.**

7. The idea is that when a flame burns, like a candle, there appears a kind of black, sootish residue (called in Sanskrit *hajjalam*) and this confirms the idea that a flame of fire (*agnijvalam*) to be predominanted by the *tamas* or dark *guṇa* of the material world.

8. Emend **tamasvaoktavasāñjatya** to **tamasvoktyāsāṅgatya**; also emend **ityāvyayaṃ** to **ityāvyayaṃ tat.**

9. According to this interpretation sunlight characteristicly travels horizontally while the light of a flame moves vertically.

10. To justify his interpretation that sunlight moves horizontally Bhāskararāya here quotes the *kavya Māgha* 1-2 as cited in the Avalon edition.

11. *Māgha*, 1-2.

12. Emend **-visesanamagnito vailaksanyadrdhikaraya** to **-visesanamagnitejovailaksanyadrdhikaraya** following GOML. What Bhaskararaya means by the °peculiar nature' (*vailaksana*) of fire is that it is at once called light while at the same time is predominated by the *guna* of darkness (*tamas*) permeating its material nature---these two characteristics are in apparent contradiction since light and darkness are considered mutually exclusive of each other.

13. Emend to insert **drsthrnam** after the word **modana** following Adyar and GOML.

14. Emend **komalamantrane** to **kevalāmantrane** following GOML. Oral tradition interprets the Avalon reading of *uvai iti komalamantrane* to mean, 'the particles *u* and *vai* mean a gentle invitation' but the emendation seems justified and is supported by other living adepts. *Komala* itself has no recorded meaning.

15. Emend **tantrāntare** to **tantrāntareṣu** following Adyar and GOML.

16. Available editions of the *Tantrarāja Tantra* do not support Bhaskararaya's view but the text has not yet been critically and definitively edited.

17. That is, rather than taking the three lines to mean the three lines that make up the gateways of the *bhūpura*.

18. The word *visṭhapā* occuring here in compound with *tri-* appears to be another example of the author using deliberately archaic vocabulary in the text.

19. *Aṇima*, the power to make oneself small, is the first of the ten powers or *siddhis* acquired by identifying them with the *bhūgṛaha* during the *srīcakra pūjā*. For a more complete discussion see Part One.

20. See *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4.1.81 and 4.1.82. Bhāskararāya is justifying his alternative reading of **atra madano madani āprathete** and is suggesting the antiquity of this Upaniṣad is shown by its use of Vedic grammar.

21. Emend to add **manditikyādīti** following Adyar.

22. This has not been found in *Padmapurāna*. In line one emend to omit **ityādi** following Adyar and GOML; in line six place a full stop following **ityādīni**. Regarding the *pīṭhas* or seats of the Goddess in various pilgrimage centers see Sircar, D.C., *The Sākta Pithas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, 1973.

23. The form **lālapyamānā** which occurs in all consulted manuscripts appears to be ungrammatical. It is taken to be present participle of the causative of the verbal root √lap.

According to Rāmānanda, "The meaning is that the qualities of the Supreme Kāmeśvara [Śiva] are enumerated without interference." The text reads in Sanskrit **ajasraṃ niravadhikaparkāmeśvaraguṇānamreḍayantītyarthaḥ**. Bhāskararāya's interpretation is not entirely clear and I have followed Rāmānanda's suggestion which does not seem opposed to Bhāskararāya.

24. See the *Mīmāṁsakasūtras*, 1.1.25, according to the Avalon edition's note.

25. This follows Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's interpretation even though he identifies the text with the *Rg Veda* like Bhāskararāya. Since Bhāskararāya attributes the different reading to a difference between the two Vedic schools it is not clear, in light of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin, if this is actual distincition.

[VERSE SEVEN]

> Knowing this [Supreme Goddess] as [residing within the] very seat [of the body, i.e., the *śrīcakra*] they please [Her] being intoxicated with ambrosial wine [they are to drink].
>
> [Her devotees are established] on the outskirts of the Great Heaven and enter into the Supreme Abode of the Three Cities.

[The word] this (f.) [in Verse Seven] means the Supreme Deity. "Knowing" (*vijñāya*) means knowing (*jñātva*) preceded by the special injunctions, that is, making [Her] one's own by the contemplative worship (*upāsti*) which is preceded by initiation (*dīkṣā*), service to the Teacher, etc. [The word] "one's own seat" (*svapīṭha*) means the *śrīcakra* which is not different than one's own body. There [in the body] resides the Goddess with Her attendents [described in the Verse as] "surrounded by nectar" (*sudhayā parisrutā*), that is, with the substances make like ambrosia [by showing the *dhenamudrā* at the time of the food offering (*naivedya*) during the *śrīcakra pūjā*].[1]

[The word] pleasing (*tarpayanta*) refers to those performing worship (*pūjāyanti*) with offerings (*upacaraiḥ*) such as liquid oblations (*tarpandādi*), etc.; they enjoy' (*mandanti*) means they enjoy (*bhajanti*) the conceptionless object as the one object identified with one's own Self, preceeded by the enjoyment of contemplating objects.[2] The meaning [of the second line of the Verse] is that those [who enjoy their own Self as conceptionless] dwell on the outskirts of the great heaven and enter into the supreme

abode called *Traipura*. Here [the notion of] making ambrosial [substances used in the ritual] is indicative of other ritual performances [such as the showing of *mudrās* during the *pūjā*].[3] Thus that ambrosial goddess (*sudhadevī*) is one's own personal deity (*abhimānadevatā*) and is understood as symbolized in the letters of the mantra of the ritual [which transforms it into ambrosia].[4] In the *Rudrayāmala* it is said:

> Purification is by the ritual mantra (*mantrasaṃskāra*) and that alone is called ambrosia (*amṛta*).[5]

[When the Verse says] "dwelling on the outskirts of the great heaven" [this is] indicative of achieving the fruits of the three human aims [in life, namely, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*]. The supreme abode [called in the Verse *traipura*] has for its very nature that which leads to liberation [but] actually it is liberation (*mokṣa*) itself that is indicated. The sense is that [*upāsakas*] obtain liberation as well as all [worldly] desires. In the *Devībhāgavatasmṛti* it says,

> It is said that, "Thus Śakti is omnipresent, She is Brahman." The wise have spoken of Her as twofold, "[She is] with qualities and without qualities". Those with desires should worship (*pūjya*) Her with qualities but those devoid of desire as without qualities. She, the Faultless One, is the Governess over *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and liberation. Or [it can be said] having been worshipped preceded by the appropriate injunctions, She gives all desired aims.[6]

Before one is to perform the *pūjā* he [or she] is to be initiated into Śrīvidyā.[7] He [or she] must have some substances [with which to perform the *pūja*] and do *arcana* to

his [or her] own body (*svapīṭha*). He [or she] should enjoy all desires in conceptionless state of mind (*nirvikalpa-vṛttidvara*). This is the source of the scriptural reference (*śrutimūlam*) for the selective injunction prescribed in the [*Paraśurāma*-] *Kalpasūtra* etc., such as, "Only an intelligent person is to be initiated".[8] Even though [a selective injunction] is revealed (*śrutam*), the specially qualified person [hearing such statements as in the Verse,] "Knowing, they please" [should understand that] the pleasing [of a deity or the ritual of *tarpana*] is related to the result of contemplation (*bhāvaṇā*) like [in the phrase] "the givers of gold enjoy immortality".[9] [The sense of the phrase, "Knowing, they please" as it occurs in the Verse] as an injunction has not been vitiated simply because it is [technically not an injunction but] a declarative statement (*mantratve'pi*) since the result is obtained only by this statement [and is not obtained from another source] and because an injunctive [sense] and a technical interpretation (*śakti*) are not opposed [to such an interpretation]. In examples like, "the chataka birds are sacrificed for spring" or "the able should be led to help the needy" [or] "the knowers of [a] face (*asya*) are called discriminating minds", all such declarative statements [intimate] the injunctive sense [and it] is in most cases attributed.[10] In fact, the word *mandanti* [meaning "one pleases"] taken in the Vedic subjunctive tense is only a declarative statement [not an

injunction] but here assumes an imperative sense by the logic [explained] in the chapters concerning *bhavārtha* [in the *Mīmāṁsakasūtras*] like in the case of the statements concerning Agni; it should be taken with the meaning of the verbal root √*mad* [meaning °to be intoxicated'] alone is [understood to be] undifferentiated from the Goddess [identified] as consciousness (*ciddevī*).[11]

The expressed meaning of the word "internal sacrifice" (*antaryāga*) is of that [sort, namely a *bhavārtha* as in the previous case] because the verbal root √*yaj* [which expresses the sense of performing a sacrifice in the compound *antaryāga*] expresses a special type of mental modification (*vṛtti*) [rather than the strictly external form of ritual].

Even the word "wine" (*parisruta*) [used in the Verse] taken in the metaphorical sense of an object which possesses it (*matvārthalakṣaṇā*) is to be construed as having a verbal meaning [in the sense of "one should drink wine"].[12] Despite the fact that [wine] distinguishes both [types] of contemplative activity [namely, external and internal sacrifices] it is to be construed as only a partial [qualification referring to only the one external contemplative action] as in the dictum of the year old calf of red color and yellow eye.[13]

[The words in the Verse] "on the outskirts of the [great] heaven" (*nākasya pṛṣṭha*) should be construed with

the sense of the verb °establishing' (*pratitiṣṭhānti*) [since they are in need of verb to form a complete sentence]. [The word] "and" indicates a collection of other fruits [including the *puruṣārthas*]. Here the qualification [to dwell in the Three Cities] is dependent upon one being connected [previously with dwelling on the outskirts of the great heaven] like [in the analogous case where it is stated] "Only by purification [first performed] does the radiant one (*tejasvin*) gain supernatural power and wealth." The sense is that the result is the accumulation of all human aims (*vyāsajyavṛtti*) as in the case [of the phrase] "from all desires" [where the results] are not connected to an individual [cause] by a single [effect]. By the dictum that the result being incomplete is [subordinate to another principle which yields] as it were a complete result, so "pleasing" (*tarpantu*) [as it is used in the Verse] is only an accessory [result of worship but not its final aim and is dependent on the latter].[14]

[When the Verse says] "knowing this (f.)" [it means that] being knowledgable is a distinctive trait of one who is qualified (*adhikāritavacchedako'dharmaḥ*). In this case the *Samayācārasmṛti* applies:

> Those twice-born persons without initiation into the tradition (kula) are not qualified.[15]

Here [in Verse Seven] the use of the present participle with [the word] "pleasing" (*tarpayanta*), as it is stated in

the injunction regarding external sacrifice which we give [in Verse Twelve as] "offering food, taking for oneself", [is like] these two words using the present participle and *lyap*-endings in regard to offerings made to the Goddess and taking [the offering] for oneself; the scripture intends [first] to enjoin the offering to the deity (*divyapana*) and not to enjoin the offering for oneself (*vīrapana*). Therefore,

> Drinking is said to be threefold: divinie, heroic and ordinary. Divine is the drinking [done ritually] in front of the Goddess, heroic [drinking] is performed [ritually at the end of the *pūjā* when you have dismissed the Goddess] from the place of worship.[16]

For this *smṛti* source there should be another [collaborating] revelation (*śruti*). But [ordinary drinking of spirits outside the ritual contexts] is a negation of the four human aims since it has for its object the attainment of desire (*rāga*) [and] need not be described in the prescriptions of ritual sacrifice.[17]

> By whatever means the intellect (*citta*) should be identified with Siva, so by any means the mind (*manas*) should be identified with Kṛṣṇa.[18]

By verses like these found in the Puranas the intention is only [to specify] desires such as these [noble efforts not ordinary desires]. From many sources such as these comes the clear mention of the injunctions [of the *śrīcakra*

pūjā] as referring to all castes (*sarvavarṇa*). What is pointed out (*itidik*) [but not elaborated upon here] is that with reference to these many statements [concerning the applicability of injunctions] there is no scope for a discussion of the strengths or weaknesses of the injunctions. This is due to the fact that they occur either directly in the recollected scriptures (*smṛti*) or they are based on the revealed scriptures (*śruti*).

Thus having prescribed the contemplative worship (*upāsti*) of the Supreme form the eighth verse is said with the desire to indicate the worship of the subtle form (*sūkṣmarūpa*) of the Goddess.[19]

[VERSE EIGHT]

> [The *śrīvidyā* mantra is esoterically revealed through the words] Desire, womb, lotus, wielder of the thunderbolt, cave, [followed by the letters] "ha" [and] "sa", the wind, cloud and Indra [Lord of the gods].
>
> Again [within the mantra occurs the syllable indicated by] cave [then] "sa", "ka" [and] "la" and Māyā---this is the Primordial Mantra [or Original Knowledge], Mother of the Universe, the Ancient.

Here the fifteen lettered mantra [i.e., the *śrīvidyā*] is revealed (*uddhriyate*). That [mantra] is described by the term knowledge (*vidyā*) because it is of the feminine gender and has the form of consciousness (*cidrūpa*).

In some places the Gāyatrī [mantra], the Mother of the Vedas, is recited explicitly even though it is the same

[from the esoteric point of view as the *śrīvidyā* mantra and thus secret and not usually revealed].[20] And Her [mantra] some instruct by words other than the explicit syllables in order to convey the deep secrecy (*atirahasyatvam*) of the mantra. Through this it is suggested that the qualified person and their actions are likewise [kept deeply secret]. In the *Tripurātāpini* [*Upaniṣad*] it has been clearly stated that the Gāyatrī [mantra] designates the original knowledge [or mantra, *ādividyā*] so why elaborate [unnecessarily here]? Even the first verse of the [*Devī-*] *Bhāgavata* supports this:

> I praise the original knowledge whose form is omniscience, let [it] instill our minds.[21]

> Because this mantra is deeply secret it should be learned only at the feet of a teacher.

[The words] *mātariśva* and *kāmā* [as they occur in Verse Eight] indicate the syallables of the Four-faced One (*caturmukhavācakāmakṣaram*) [i.e., the god Brahma].[22] [The words] *kamalā* and *yoni* [indicate] the fourth and eleventh vowels [i.e., the long "*ī*" and "*e*" as they are contained in the mantra].[23] [The words] *indra* and *vajrapāṇi* [represent] the third of the semivowels [i.e., "*la*"].[24] [The words] *guhā* and *māyā* [represent] the seed [syllable] of [the Goddess] Bhuvaneśvarī [i.e., *hrīṃ*]. [The word] *abhra* [represents] the letter "*ha*" [which is also] the first letter of the previous [seed syllable (*bījākṣara*) of Bhuvaneśvarī]. The remaining five [syllables of the mantra]

are in their own [explicit] form [rather than represented by another esoteric term].

This original knowledge [or primordial mantra] is [called in Verse Eight] purūci [meaning] ancient (puratāni).[25] Mother of the Universe (viśvamata) [as it occurs in the Verse] means the creator of the world (jagajjanayitri). In the Yoginīhṛdaya's section on the traditional meaning (sampradāyārtha) the creation of the world by the syllables of [this śrīvidyā] mantra (vidya) has been elaborated in detail.[26] But the meaning of the mantra has been variously explained in different Tantras according to the various [twelve forms it takes as it was revealed through the twelve sages and gods] beginning with Agastya, Dattātreya, etc.[27] And [the form and meaning of] the mantra grasped according to my own interpretation has been presented in the Varivasyarahasya and so should be understood [as it is presented there].[28]

In order to indicate the mantra (vidyā) of the contemplative worship (upāsitam) of [the followers of] Lopamudrā and the mantra worship of [the followers of] Kāmarāja, the ninth verse is said.

1. Emend **tatra** to **tatratya** following Adyar and GOML.

2. Emend **viṣayabhānapramoṣapūrvakaṃ** to **viṣayabhāvanapramodapūrvakam** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **bhāvanti** to **bhajanti** following GOML.

3. Emend **amṛtokaraṇam** to **ithaṃ amṛtīkaraṇaṃ.**

4. Emend **tadābhimānnidevatāyāṃ** to **tadābhimānadevatāyāḥ** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **saṃvicca** to **saṃjñaca.**

5. This quotation is not found in the printed editions of the *Rudrayamala* but the title is often used as a catch-all for stray verses without clear attribution. This may be the case here.

6. These verses attributed to *Devībhāgavata* have not been located.

7. The word *śrīvidyā* may also be interpreted as meaning the mantra. Thus one must first be initiated into the *śrīvidyā* mantra; but the suggestion here seems more encompassing and it has been taken in the broader sense of the larger initiation process.

8. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, 1.31.

9. A °selective injunction' is understood here as the subject of the sentence.

The example of the °givers of gold' is intended to make clear the connection between the action and its direct result. Contemplation (*bhāvaṇā*) spoken of here yields its results as directly is what is suggested.

The entire passage beginning with the words **vastuto madantītyasya** to **na vīrapanavidhau** is unclear but it attempts to explain "knowing, they please". One should first "know" the preliminaries and details of the ritual and then "please", taking the Upaniṣad which is merely a declarative statement (i.e., a *mantra*-statement) in the sense of an injunctive (i.e., a *vidhi-statement*). This is justified because the act of pleasing is only for the sake of obtaining liberation and not for the worldly end of obtaining gold.

10. Emend **praṇīyādi** to **praṇīyād.**

11. The meaning of *agneyavākya* is not entirely clear. Concerning the statements relating to Agni and the *homa*-sacrifices, in these a third person indicative ending is used but the Vedic interpreters (according to the *Bṛhatī*, p.286) have concluded that such *agneyavākyas* should be taken as if they are imperatives. In other words by assuming the imperative for the indicative third person present *mandanti* meaning 'he pleases' it should be taken to mean 'he should please'. According to oral

traditions the verbal root √*mad*, to be intoxicated, has an imperative sense here indicating a kind of activity related only to one's own self as it is identified with the universal consciousness, thus by pleasing oneself one pleases the universal deity. Concerning Bhāskararāya's remark: °by the logic [explained] in the chapter [in the Mīmāṃsa texts] concerning *bhavārtha*' see the *Bṛhatī* with Prabhākāra's commentary, the chapter entitled *bhavārthadhikāraṇa* in *Bṛhati of Prabhākāra Miśra (on the Mīmāṃsaka Sūtrabhāṣya of Śābara) with the Ṛjuvimalā Pañcika of Śālikanātha*. Edited by S.Subrahmanya Sastri. Madras: University of Madras Publications, 1962, p.286.

12. *Matvārthalakṣaṇā* is a type of metaphorical interpretation but it is not to my knowledge explained in textual sources. Oral tradition explains: 'Like other instances of *lakṣaṇā* here too a secondary or metaphorical interpretation is necessary because the primary sense of the word does not fit. *Matvārthalakṣaṇā* is that type of metaphor in which a word signifying a particular object is interpreted as signifying what possesses that object. It is called 'possessing the object' (*matvārtha-*) because the object (*artha*) possesses by virtue of the sense of the suffix *mat*. For example, when we say soma sacrifice' (*somayāga*) a doubt arises as to how it should be interpreted. Does it mean that it is a sacrifice qualified by the presence of *soma* or does it mean that it is a sacrifice in the form of *soma*. In other words, instead of saying that the sacrifice is qualified by *soma* it could be said that the sacrifice is the *soma* itself and thereby suggesting the primary sense of the word *soma*. This argument is refuted by asserting that *soma* is a substance (*dravya*) to be used in a sacrifice and as such it cannot be identified with the sacrifice itself since it is a mere accessory (*aṅga*) to it. Thus the primary sense of the word *soma* cannot give a coherent meaning to the sentence and *lakṣaṇā* must be resorted to, which is to say that *soma* means *somavat*, that is, that which *possesses soma*. Now here the word 'wine' referring to the sacrifice in which it is found as an accessory is further interpreted as being in the imperative sense.'

13. The sense here is also not clear and the translation follows oral interpretations of the text. The dictum (*nyāya*) used by Bhāskararāya is explained in oral tradition: °In the *Taittīrya Saṁhitā* 6.1.6.7. there is a statement, 'He purchases a year old calf of red color and yellow eye'. Here the one year old calf is the primary consideration of the purchase but not the red color and the yellow eye which are only accidental. These characteristics, therefore, are not the conditions for purchase but they do distinguish this calf for sale from any other. Similarly in this sentence the one contemplative activity alone is important and not any of the accidental characteristics which are only partial descriptions of it.'

14. See Apte, V.S., *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Revised and enlarged edition, Poona, 1957, reprinted Kyoto, Japan: Rinsen Book Company, 1978, Appendix E, p.57. Here the dictum is rephrased but conveys a similar notion: **phalavatsānnidhavaphalam tandangam.** Also cf., *Sābarabhāṣya* on *Mīmāṁsakasūtras*, 4.4.19. Note that Bhāskararāya uses the identical dictum to make a similar point in the *Setubandha* on *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava*, I.125.

15. This reference to the *Samayācārasmṛti* is particularily interesting since it suggests a sectarian literature associated with the Samaya school of Śrīvidyā. Among historical commentators Lakṣmīdhara is the best known Samayācārin and one might expect this quotation to turn up in his commentary on the *Saundaryalaharī* since no text of this title is recorded. This is not the case and the verse remains unidentified. It is also not possible to state definitively that the work's title confirms the existence of literature belonging exclusively to the Samaya school since *samayācāra*' might well only mean 'those who practice with discipline' and there are no other specific Samaya works other than ritual handbooks (*paddhatis* and *nibandhas*).

16. This passage is unidentified.

17. Bhāskararāya here explains why the third type of drinking, *pasupana* or creaturely drinking' is not discussed.

18. In the following line Bhāskararāya says this verse occurs in the Puranas but it remains as yet unidentified.

19. Verse Eight of the Upaniṣad is quoted by Bhāskararāya in his *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, the commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma* I.17. Here the text is called *Tripurāsūkta* and is said to be part of the Ātharvanapatha, that is, belonging to the Ātharvaṇa school. Regarding other names given to the text and its belonging to both Ṛg and Ātharvaṇa schools see the Introduction to Part Three.

20. *Kanthavena* has no recorded meaning in lexicons. Oral traditions assert that it means 'explicitly' or 'clearly' which certainly fits the contexts of the sentence.

On the identification of the Śrīvidyā mantra with the famous Vedic *gāyatrī* see Part One.

21. This verse is not found in known editions of the *Devībhāgavatam*. What is noteworthy is the fact that the verse itself imitates the structure and meter of the Ṛg Vedic *gāyatrī*, a pattern that other *gāyatrīs* also follow. These mantras are especially important in the worship of particular aspects of gods found in more localized contexts. In Cidambaram, for example, a *gāyatrī* is designed for the consort of Naṭarāja, Sivakāmasundarī, and is passed as secret lore among the traditional priests.

22. Bhāskararāya begins to reveal the fifteen lettered form of the Śrīvidyā mantra here by making oblique references to certain deities associated with specific syllables. This is the technique of initiates who will usually not make explicit the mantra itself either by writing it or uttering it aloud. The code, however, is quite clear provided the clues are carefully considered in the setting of oral tradition and the mantraśāstra. The words mātariśvā and kāma both indicate the syllable ka associated with the four-faced god Brahma.

23. Sixteen vowels are counted here making the long ī and e the fourth and eleventh respectively. They are: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ, e, o, ai, au, aṃ (anusvāra) and aḥ (visarga).

24. Counting the semi-vowels as four, namely, ya, ra, la and va, la is the third.

This completes the first kūṭa or set of syllables in the fifteen lettered Srīvidya mantra as shown below.

Matarisava/Kama = ka
Yoni = e
Kamala = ī
Indra/Vajrapani = la
Bhuvanesvari
bijaksara = hrīṃ

These syllables viewed successively are the first five elements of the kādi-version of the srividya, making up the first kuṭa.

In the second kūṭa the mantra is revealed somewhat differently:
svarūpa or in its 'own [explicit] form' = ha
svarūpa also = sa
Mātariśvā = ka
Abha = ha
Indra = la
Punarguhā (literally 'the secret again')
the bījākṣara of BhuvanesarvI = hrīṃ

In the third kūṭa the first three letters are in their explict forms while the Bhuvansesvari bījākṣara is identified with the goddess as Māyā, thus the kuṭa reads sa, ka, la, hrīṃ.

The śrīvidyā itself in its kādividyā form is complete:

ka e ī la hrīṃ
ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ
sa ka la hrīṃ

For a complete discussion see Part One.

25. Purūci is an obscure term and it would appear that this is yet another effort to portray the Upaniṣad as an ancient, indeed, an archaic work. Neither Upaniṣadbrahmayogin nor Rāmānanda offer much elucidation on the meaning of the term, the translation follows Bhāskararāya's gloss.

26. See *Yoginīhrdaya*, II.26ff and the *Setubandha*. Here each letter of the mantra is assigned a mystical identification with various aspects of the universe.

27. The twelve forms of the mantra are discussed in Part One.

28. *Varivasyarahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin*, edited with English translation by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastrī. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library and Research Center, 1934, fourth edition 1976.

[VERSE NINE]

> [Replacing] the three root [syllables of each *kūta*] of this [Kāmarāja *kādividyā* mantra as described in the previous verse with the letters ha, sa and ka represented by the words] six, seven and fire (*vahni* or Siva) they [i.e., the devotees come to] dwell [in the Lopamudrā *hādividyā* mantra].
>
> Praising the Lord, Desire, the Imagined, the [One] Explained [in the Vedas], they enjoy immortality.

[The word] "of this" (f.) (*asya*) [as it occurs in Verse Nine] means of this mantra' (*vidyā*). The three root [syllables] (*mūlatrikam*) means the three [first] syllables of the first [*kūta* or line of the mantra].[1] [The word] "replacing" (*unmulya*) is to be supplied [after the word *mūlatrikam* as it occurs in the Verse]. In place of [the first three syllables of the mantra as it is described in Verse Eight] by substituting the three letters beginning with the sixth [syllable of the Kāmarāja *vidyā* as Verse Eight has given it], those who do silent repetition (*japaka*) by either of [these] two mantras [either as described according to the Kāmarāja *vidyā* in Verse Eight or with the alterations of the Lopamudrā *vidyā* as it is here, praise] the body (*upādhikam*) of the Supreme Śiva whose nature is pure.[2]

[The word] *tuṣṭhuvāṁsaḥ* (literally, "those who praise") means praising, that is, doing silent repetition [of the mantra]. [When the Verse says they] enjoy immortality [it means] one should attain liberation by the silent repetition

of the mantra (*vidyā*).[3] *Īśa*, the Lord, is explained as *kāma*, desire. [This is explained] with reference to the discussion (*pratpadya*) in the scripture under the heading of *Īkṣata* [that is, in the *Brahmasūtras* where] it has resolved to say, "He desired, let me be many, let me procreate."[4]

[The word] "imagined" (*kalpakam*) [as it occurs in Verse Nine] refers to the presiding [deity] of the mentally constructed world as it is discussed [in the *Brahmasūtras*] under the heading [which begins with the *sūtra*], "Birth, etc."[5] Omniscient (*kavi*) [in the Verse] means the creator of the Veda (*vedapraṇetaram*) [i.e., Siva].[6]

Kathyam means one to be understood only through the Vedas as it has been discussed [in the *Brahmasūtras*] under the heading [which begins with the *sūtra*], "*Śāstrayoni*". What has been mentioned [there] as the two letters is [identified as] the Supreme Brahman. This is the special meaning submitted here.[7]

[In Verse One] beginning with the words "deathless, ancient" [She has been described] with the qualities of Brahman [i.e., in the neuter gender] while here [in this Verse She] is mentioned in the masculine gender, and in the forthcoming verse on *kāmakalā* meditation in the feminine gender. Thus there are three types of meditation (*dhyāna*) prescribed on the Supreme Deity. This is similarly collaborated in the *Kulārṇava* [*Tantra*]:

> The Devī should be recalled either in the masculine form or conceived in the feminine form:

> otherwise one should meditate on the partless (niṣkalā) characterized as being consciousness and bliss.[8]

Even though it is said, "One should meditate on the partless (niṣkalā) [aspect] as the supreme contemplative worship (paropāsti), on the masculine form as the subtle contemplative worship (sūkṣmopāsti) and on the feminine form as the external sacrifice (bahiryāga)", and this division is well-documented, still since it will be [later] stated that the masculine and feminine are of equal priority [meditation on one or the other] is an option [to be] chosen following one's own tradition (sampradāya).[9] With reference to the other vidyās (i.e., the mantras) worshipped (upāsita) by Manu, Candra and others as mentioned in the Tripurātāpinī [Upaniṣad], in the present contexts the mention of these two [i.e., the mantras of Kamaraja and Lopamudra only] suggests their importance. Hence in the Jñānārṇava [Tantra], having considered the twelve kinds of vidyās it has been corroborated:

> O Auspicious One, these two vidyās are difficult to obtain even for the gods.[10]

Of these two [vidyās] because the kādividyā [i.e., the Kāmarāja mantra] has been described first its priority (adhikya) is suggested. The Brahmapurāṇa supports this view:

> Just as the Kādi [mata texts are supreme [among the Tantric texts] so the śrīvidyā is supreme and likewise the kādi [mantra] is supreme.[11]

In fact it has been well established by me in the Setubandha since all vidyās are not different, a comparison of one to another is merely for the sake of praising [one and encouraging its performance].[12] Therefore the Auspicious Bhāgavatpāda [Śaṅkarācārya] in the Saundaryalaharī has presented these two [vidyās] in the reverse order [that is, he has presented the Lopamudrā hādividyā version first in the text].[13] Even there [in the Saundaryalaharī] in order to follow this scripture (śruti) the words [in verse 32 of that text], śiva, śakti, kāma, smāra, yoni and lakṣmī are interpreted by some differently, but that should not be accepted since it is faulty (kliṣtva) and meaningless (nirāryakatva).[14]

Since in the present contexts internal sacrifice (antaryāga) is the subject, the mention in Verse Twelve of the substances [employed in that internal sacrifice] suggests they have a different set of qualities [than the material offerings]. In those contexts what is said is that the silent repetition [of the mantra] prescribed in the middle of that [internal sacrifice] is to be considered a subordinate aspect of internal sacrifice.[15]

[The phrase in Verse Nine] "they enjoy the immortal" (amṛtam bhajante) is a statement of inducement just like [the inducement] of hearing about a sinless world [gained as the result of performing good deeds].[16] Even though [the

said [to be individually different], when considered in particular contexts there is no choice [as to which fruits will be gained or not by each form of worship] just as in the case of the six types of fire sacrifice where the results are accrued collectively and not severally. So it is said,

> The householder should always perform the internal sacrifice and the external sacrifice [as well as] worship (*arcanam*) of the king of cakras [i.e., the *śrīcakra*], silent repetition of the *vidyā* and praising [Her] names [such as in the *Lalitāsahasranāma*]. They said that the actions of the devotee are for none other than his prosperity.[19]

But it is also said that internal sacrifice and silent repetition of the mantra alone bring about results in accordance with the special qualities of the qualified. [By analogy we observe that] for those who know this dictum, in the absence of the combination of the cake offerings with the *agnisoma*, the non-*soma* sacrificer [too] achieves results.[20]

Now the Tenth Verse is said beginning with the words "the three worlds" (*triviṣṭhapam*) in order to prescribe the contemplative worship (*upāsti*) of the physical [form] of the principle deity conceived as inwardly having qualities (*antarsaguṇatvena*); in order to establish [Her] on the external [form] of the [*śrī*-] *cakra* and in order to indicate [Her] physical characteristics (*sthūlaviśeṣam*).

[VERSE TEN]

> I praise the Mother of the Universe [who dwells in] the three worlds, on the three sides [i.e., the triangles] consisting of nine lines in the middle of which is the vowel "aḥ" (*visarga*).
> She shines as the primordial sixteenth **nityā** [present] in the midst of the city [i.e., the *śrīcakra*, She who is] great [and the cause of] the fifteen *tithis*.

After the word 'lines' (*rekhā*) [in the Verse] the sixteenth vowel [that is, the] *visarga* is to be retained [rather than assimilated according to the rules of grammatical combination, i.e., *sandhi*]. [The sense of the words 'the nine lines' in the Verse is that] in the [midst of] nine lines are the forms of the nine *Yonis* in the middle of which is placed the vowel '*aḥ*' [that is, the *visarga*]. [An] alternative [explanation is that] the nine lines refer to the lines counted as nine that make up the *samhāra* cakra [that is, the eight minor triangles of the *vasukoṇa* cakra plus the central triangle] in the middle of which is the place indicated by the vowel '*aḥ*'. Or the letter (*akṣara*) [i.e., the vowel '*aḥ*'] can be divided grammatically to mean that the [vowel] '*aḥ*' is that in which the very form of the vowel (*svara*) is the letter '*a*' (*akāra*). That is to say that [the compound] 'the three sides' (*trimukham*) is just such a type of triangle, that is a triangle in the middle [of which is the vowel '*aḥ*'].

This is as much as to say [that in the middle of the central triangle of the *śrīcakra*] is the place of worship (*pūjāsthānām*), the place where [She] dwells [called in the

verse] "the three worlds" (*triviṣṭhapam*) [and there is the Goddess] Tripurasundarī [literally the 'Beauty of the Three Cities', called in the Verse] the Mother of the Universe (*viśvamātuḥ*). Here the place [designated in the Verse as the three worlds] explicitly refers to heaven (*svarga*) which is the abode of the gods.

"I praise" (*tadīle*) [in the Verse] is a poetic expression (*iti stoturvakyam*). According to the prescriptions of Vedic grammar (*pratiśākhya*) "*la*" is the substitute of "*ḍa*" [when it is said], "The letter "*la*" is [substitute] when the letter "*ḍa*" occurs between two vowels."[21] This same reading of the Upaniṣad [with reference to "*īle*"-ending on the verb] is also followed by the members of the Ātharvaṇika school. But in their opinion there is no such substitution of "*la*" [for "*da*"].[22] What is suggested is that by saying the [vowel] '*aḥ*' should be in the middle [of the central triangle of the *śrīcakra*] the remaining fifteen vowels should be placed on the three lines [of the central triangle] surrounding the *bindu* [in the center].[23] [This is] according to the dictum, "It should be [distributed] equally", [these fifteen vowels] are placed [on each of the three sides of the central triangle] five to a side.

That [central] triangle is [called in the Verse] great (*bṛhad*) because it is imagined that the fifteen *tithis* who are the fifteen deities of the lunar days of the month,

[identified as those] beginning with Kāmeśvarī and ending with Citrā, are eternal (*nityā*) [and] shine (*bibhartti*) [as called mentioned also in the Verse]. The intention is that one should perform the worship (*pūjā*) of the [fifteen] *nityās* [i.e., the 'eternal' deities identified with the *tithis*, identifying] five on each of the right, upper and left sides [of the central triangle of the *śrīcakra*].[24] This has been corroborated in *Jñānārṇava* [*Tantra*]:

> And that is imagined as great (*mahat*). The three [sets of [*nityādevatās*] in the order of right, upper and left [sides] should be inscribed on the [three] lines, five each respectively. One the right [side line] should be imagined the five beginning with [the deity Kāmeśvarī whose seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*)] is "*a*" and ending with [the deity Vahnī whose seed-syllable is] "*u*"; then on the upper [side] the group beginning with "*u*" [that is, Maheśvarī]; on the left are inscribed the five beginning with Sakti [i.e., "*e*", "*o*", "*ai*" and "au"] up to the *anusvāra* [i.e.,"*aṃ*"] and is the middle is worshipped the *visarga* [i.e., "*aḥ*"] as the sixteenth.[25]

The phases of the moon capable of waxing and waning are fifteen and they alone are the *tithis*. In other Tantras it is said:[26]

> And from the new moon to the full moon the phases (*kalā*) are exactly fifteen.[27]

This [central triangle is identified with] "seeing, seen and seer", as in the *Taittīriya Brāhmaṇa* and elsewhere.[28] The sixteenth phase known as *sādākhya* (literally, "said always to exist") being without waxing and waning is the cause of all the other [fifteen]. And that [*sādākhya*], the sixteenth identified with the unity Supreme

Goddess and Śiva] being the cause of the fifteen *nityās* is called the Original *Nityā* (*ādinityā*).

[The word] She [in the Verse] has been described previously as Tripurasundarī and others, the very form (*svarūpa*) of *nityā*.[29] [The compound *puramadhyam* as it occurs in the Verse is interpreted: She is identified on] the place of the *visarga* vowel, that is, in the middle (*madhyam*) of the city (*pura*) which is the *śrīcakra* [and there She] shines (*bibhartti*), that is to say, [She] is present (*adhyāste*). This [interpretation] is to be considered proper because the letter "*ha*" having the form of Illumination (*prakāśa*, identified with Śiva) and Reflection (*vimarśa*, identified with Śakti) has the very nature of that sixteenth vowel.

In order to instruct in these present contexts the meditation on *Kāmakalā* associated with external sacrifice (*bahiryāga*), the Eleventh Verse is said.[30]

1. The three syllables are ka, e and ī.

2. Śiva here in His supreme aspect is viewed from the *saguṇa* perspective, that is, as having qualities, the predominant quality (*guṇa*) being purity (*sattva*). From the *saguṇa* perspective Śivā has assumed *upādhis*, limitations, that give Him His conceptual form.

The substitution intended by Bhāskararāya puts the sixth, seventh and eighth syllables of the *kādividyā srividya*, ha, sa and ka in place of the first three syllables, ka, e and ī. The *hādividyā* *śrīvidyā* then is:

ha sa ka la hrīm
ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ
sa ka la hrīṃ

3. Note that the word *tusthuvāṁsaḥ* is a Vedic form derived from the verbal root √*stu*, to praise. It is the *parismaipada* of the perfect participle in the sense of an agent, that is, 'those who praise'. See MacDonnell, A.A., *Vedic Grammar*. Delhi: Indological Book House, reprint edition, 1968, p.363.

Bhāskararāya interprets the verb *bhajante*, third person plural present *ātmanepada* of √*bhaj*, with an injunctive sense. He glosses it with *bhavayet*, the third person singular optative *parasmaipada* of √*bhu*, to be.

4. Following Śaṅkarācārya's division of the *Brahmasutras* the *adhikāraṇa* is called *īksatyadhikāraṇa* beginning at 1.1.5 and ending at 1.1.12. Bhāskararāya extends the *adhikāraṇa* to at least 1.1.16 where this quotation from the *Taittīriya Upaniṣad* occurs, cf., *Taittīriya Upaniṣad*, 2.6.

5. Called *janmādyadikāraṇa*, it is *Brahmasūtra*, 1.1.2-1.1.4.

6. The standard Śaiva point of view is expressed here, namely that Śiva is the creator of the Vedas. The Vedas in Śaiva-Śākta theology are *apauraṣeya* insofar as they are not of human origin.

7. The *śāstrayoni* *adhikāraṇa* is *Brahmasūtras* 1.1.3-1.1.4.

8. *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 4.114-115.

9. The quotation is unidentified. Emend japet to sūkṣmopāstau following Adyar.

10. *Jñānarṇava Tantra*, 12.4.

11. This reference to *Brahmānda Purāṇa* is actually *Lalitāsahasranāma*, I.17cd. *Lalitāsahasarnāma* is considered a portion of the Purāna.

12. cf., *Setubandha* on *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 1.24 where the qualification for the *śrīvidyā* is discussed; also *Yoginīhrdaya*, 2.14 where Bhāskararāya refers to the differing opinions concerning *kādi-* and *hādividyās*.

13. See *Saundaryalaharī*, 32-33. Bhāskararāya's point is that since both mantras are of equal status Śankara has chosen to present **hādividyā** first though *kādividyā* is given priority. Among the commentators on *Saundaryalaharī* only Laksmidhara interprets verse 32 as *kādividyā*---all others including Kaivalyāsrama and Kamesvarapandita take it to indicate *hādividyā*.

14. Bhāskararāya clearly sides with Kaivalyāśrama and the other commentators who interpret verse 32 of *Saudaryalaharī* as *hādividyā* and discredits Lakṣmīdhara whom he may well have had in mind since he is aware of the Samayācāra school's interpretations.

Emend to add **smarayonīlakṣmīpādānāṃ** after **śivaśaktikāmapadānāṃ** following Adyar.

15. Emend **prakaraṇitvena** to **praharanatvena** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **patitasya** to **paṭhitasya** following GOML.

16. According to oral traditions the distinctive trait of an *arthavāda* statement is that it serves as an inducement to action rather than strictly as a command. In other words, if one does 'x' then 'y' will be gained, thus one should do 'x'. The distinctions between *mantra*, *vidhi* and *arthavāda* are variously interpreted in Mīmāṁsaka traditions.

17. Previously Bhāskararāya had taken *amrtam bhajante* as a *vidhi*, an injunction, and here he qualifies his view the statement is actually an *arthavāda*, a statement of inducement. Can a declarative statement, a *mantra*, be a *vidhi*? The earlier answer was yes. Now he asks can a *mantra* be an *arthavāda* and answers yes again. According to oral traditions there are two types of *arthavāda*, the first sort being an encouragement to act but is not necessarily a proven or accomplished fact while the second, the *bhūtārthavāda*, is an accomplished fact and is necessarily true. This second type is what is intended here.

Bhāskararāya has in mind statements concerning mantra repetition, *japa*, which he considers not merely *arthavādas* but *bhūtārthavādas*. The argument is that the knowledge that liberates, embodied in the mantra, [illegible] not new, that is, it is an accomplished fact (*bhūta*) and not something yet to come into being (*bhavya*). Oral tradition asserts that

knowledge merely removes adventitious obstacles, thus when *japa* is performed the mind becomes so pure that the obstacles are dispelled. It can be said then that through *japa* the aspirant attains *moksa* though technically it is not the *japa itself* that brings about the liberation, it merely removes the obstacles allowing the natural state of liberation to shine through.

18. By three kinds of contemplative worship Bhāskararāya means *upāsana* on the gross, subtle and transcendent aspects of the goddess. He asserts that each form of *upāsana* leads to the same result but goes on to say that it is the collective worship of all three that insures results. While the *upāsana* is usually hierarchy arranged according to the aspect worshipped, Bhāskararāya does not undervalue any of the three forms.

19. The last line of this unidentified verse makes little sense. It reads: **bhaktasya kṛtyāmctavādanyādabhyudāyam viduḥ.** Consulted manuscripts offer no better alternative. The translation follows from context and the suggestions of living adepts. What Bhāskararāya means is that individually these acts do not bring about results, rather it is only collectively that they confer benefits.

20. According to oral tradition the cake offerings called *purodāsa* are made of brown rice and are offered in vessels or skulls, or they made of ground-meal with clarified butter. The example is intended to show that the full *soma* sacrifice requires the use of these cake offerings while for the non-*soma* sacrificer these offerings are optional. Just prior to this Bhāskararāya argued that results are achieved collectively through all aspects of worship. Now he argues for a provision that suggests results can come from individual acts or from individual acts performed apart from the whole sacrifice in which they are prescribed.

21. This statement in the *Pratiśākhyas* is unidentified. What Bhāskararāya means here is that one could read either *tadīle* or *tadīde* in the Verse. This is yet another example of Bhāskararāya's treatment of the Upaniṣad as Vedic text exhibiting the peculiarities of Vedic grammar.

22. Emend **sañjātaḥ** to **ādeśa** following Adyar.

23. Emend **naduḥspṛṣthādeśa** to **tu nālādeśaḥ**.

24. Bhāskararāya has in mind the identification of the fifteen (or sixteen) *nityās* each representing a day on the lunar calender. There are at least two prominent opinions as to how this is to be performed. According to the first, during the *śuklapakṣa*, or bright half of the lunar month as

the moon wanes, the deities are placed counterclockwise beginning at the base of the *vasukoṇa* five to each side of the triangle. In this procedure one begins with Kāmeśvara and ends with Citra. But during the *kṛṣṇapakṣa*, or dark half of the lunar month as the moon waxes, the order of the *nityās* is reversed, that is, Citrā is first and Kāmeśvarā last. Also in the *kṛṣṇapakṣa* the *bījākṣaras* **am, au, ai, e** and **o** precede the name of the *nityā*. This practice is common today among south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. According to the *Nityotsava* of Umānandanātha, a work that one would suspect reflects Bhāskararāya's own views since it is authored by his most famous disciple, there is no mention of this reversal of identification. Rāmeśvara on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* is silent on the matter. In contemporary *paddhatis* the majority opinion is that no such reversal occurs but there are, as it were, no textual authorities to which one can refer to reflect on the practice historically.

25. *Jñanārnava Tantra*, 16.36cd-39ab. Bhāskararāya's reading, however, differs from that of the Ānandasrama edition. The variants are:

	Bhāskararāya	Ānandāśrama
v.36cd	**agradakṣo-**	**pūrvadakṣo-**
v.37ab	**paścāt** **ha**	**tatra** **hi**
v.37cd	**anukarānta** **dakṣiṇāyāṃ**	**uvarṇānta** **dakṣiṇasyam**
v.38ab	**dīrghakaranādi**	**ukarādi**
v.39ab	**anusvārantaṃ madhye**	**anusvārantamantrastu**

Emend 36cd to **dakṣagrauttarakramāt**; emend 37cd to **uvarnānta**; emend 38ab to **ukarādi**.

26. Emend **ityādīna tantre nirdiṣṭhaḥ** to **ityādīna tantrantare nirdiṣṭhitaḥ** following Adyar.

27. Unidentified verse.

28. *Taittīriya Brahmaṇa*, 3.10.1 following the citation in the Avalon edition.

29. Emend **tripurasuṇḍaro adityasvarūpā** to **tripurasundarītyādi nityāsvarupā.**

30. Emend prasangāt kāmaṃ to prasaṅgātkāmyam.

[VERSE ELEVEN]

> [In *Kāmakalā* meditation] the two circles are the two breasts, the one reflection is the face and half [the letter "*ha*" is the female organ]. The three [limbs of the body] are the secret mansions [identified with the outermost three lines of the *bhūgrha* sub-cakra of the *śrīcakra*].
>
> Meditating upon the desired, the aspect (*kalā*) [of Manmatha] [and] what has a desirable form, a man is born the Form of Desire [i.e., Śiva] desired [by women].

[The words in the Verse] the two circles [refer to] the two breasts. [What is called] the one reflection is the face below. The three mansions (*sadanāni*) [in the Verse] are [the three outer lines of] the *bhūgṛaha* [cakra, that is the outer gate way of the *śrīcakra* surrounding the configuration]. The secret [form identified with the female organ is represented by] the form of half the letter "*ha*" (*hakārārdha*).[1]

Even according to lexical meanings the [word] reflection (*bimba*) is non-feminine [in gender] and circle (*maṇḍala*) is [found] in [all] three genders. Thus even the word reflection can have the [grammatical] sense of circle. Following the description of the three circles (*maṇḍalas*) given in Verse Four, they are in this context identified with the two breasts as the fire circle (*vahnimaṇḍala*) and the sun circle (*sūryamaṇḍala*) because of the intention with which the word reflection is used here. According to the order of the rendering [in this text] the face alone is the reflection (*bimba*) identified with the moon [*maṇḍala*] and is

below the breasts. [This is the case] because of the intention with which [the word] half (adhaḥ) is used [in the verse].

It is clearly inferred that [by saying] "half the letter 'na'" [the author means] the bhūpura [cakra, that is the outermost gateways of the śrīcakra] which is [considered in meditation to be] below the breasts. There are [however] various forms of Kāmakalā [meditation] given in a reverse order [of description] in various places in the Tantras. Similarly the Bhāgavatpāda [Śaṅkarācārya] has corroborated by following the order of meaning rather than the order of words by saying,

> One should meditate imagining the face as the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra] below which are the two breasts and below that half the letter "ha" [i.e., the female organ].2

The word reflection (bimba) refers to the bindu [and] that [reflection] refers to the collection of cakras beginning with the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra] and ending with the manvaśra cakra [that is, the cakra of fourteen minor triangles].3

> The forms of the three circles have the nature of a wheel (cakra), power (śakti) and fire (anala).4

Thus in this [above quoted] verse of the Sundarīhṛdaya the word circle (maṇḍalī) is explained as referring to the [sub-] cakras [of the śrīcakra] beginning with the inner ten

[minor triangles] and the rest [proceeding outward].

In order to conceive the six *maṇḍalas* [of the *sricakra*] beginning with the *bindu* [and proceeding outward] as a single unit, the word "one" [is used in Verse Eleven].

[The compound in the Verse] "the two circles" (*dvamaṇḍalau*) are referring to the two [sub-] cakras of eight and sixteen [lotus] petals.

The mention of these three limbs [of the body] suggests all the limbs [of the body]. Actually even the [human] body has only three limbs, [namely,] (1.) from the head to the throat, (2.) from the throat to the breasts and (3.) from the heart to the anus.[5] The hair, hands and feet are each their own respective branches.

Thus the [word] *kāmīm* [in the Verse] refers to one who has transformed himself into the nature of all the [sub-] cakras [of the *śrīcakra*]. *Kalā* [in the Verse refers to that aspect of the evolution of the thirty-six *tattvas* which make up the world as] the aspect (*kalā*) of consciousness associated with Manmatha [i.e., Śiva] who has the nature of Kāmeśvara, the Lord of Desire. [The words in the Verse] *kāmyarūpam* [literally, a desirable form]. Knowing [in the Verse] means meditating upon. In another branch [of the Vedic schools] the reading is *cikitvā* [literally, knowing, for *viditva* as it is here].[6] [The word] man (*nara*) means the *upāsaka* [that is, the meditative worshipper]. *Kāmarūpa*

[the Form of Desire] refers [in the Verse] to Manmatha [i.e., Śiva] who causes an immediate [mental] disturbance (*kṣobhakāra*) in all women by virtue of his beauty. Only very little [about the concept of *kāmakalā* meditation] is said here. [The word] desirable (*kāmya*) [in the Verse] means hearing of his special attributes [one becomes like him, desirable] and a form attractive to all the people living in the three worlds. It has been said by Bhāgavatpāda [Śankarācārya]:

> Whoso meditates, O Consort of Hara, on your *kalā* [i.e., seed syllable] of Manmatha suddenly leads women to confusion, how much less is [the woman called] the Three Worlds (*trilokīm*) confused, [She] who has the sun and the moon as her breasts.[7]

Thus one who wishes to obtain a desirable form should meditate on the *kāmakalā* according to the prescription which connects the fruit with the attributes [of meditation].[8] But in this regard the intention of the Bhāgavatpāda is that the fruit of the meditation prescribed having a particular result is achieved even apart from (*bahir*) the external sacrifice (*bahiryāga*); [this is the case because the result] is not connected as an [inseparable] part of the external sacrifice as the *syena* sacrifice (*syenakavādeḥ*) is as a part of the Soma [sacrifice], so by its nature (*svataḥ*) it does not depend upon the form of any other ritual (*kriyā*). In the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* [it says],

> Conceiving the *bindu* as the face and the two breasts are established as below that.

> One should consider the female organ (adhomukham) together with half the letter "ha" as below those [two breasts].9

If you say that this meditation is thought of in the sense of a sacrifice because it is enjoined in the section on sacrifice [in the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava], what harm is there in that? Since there is no objection even for external practice [of this form of meditation] for those whose aim are its fruits.10 Hence it is said in the Bhaktisūtra beginning with a recollection of the Blessed One [Kṛṣṇa], "Everything is, as it were, covered both inside and outside."11

The Twelfth Verse is said in order to enjoin the substances used in external sacrifice and the method of employing [these] substances in the external sacrifice.

[VERSE TWELVE]

> Wine, fish and before [fish] meat; grains and wombs [indicating sexual intercourse] should be well-performed [in the ritual worship].
>
> Offering food to the Great Goddess, the adept performer should take it for himself [and so] accomplish [the aim of the sacrifice].

[The word] jhasa [in the Verse] means fish (matsya), palam means meat (māṁsam).

[The Verse says] before the fish [is offered and consumed] there is wine. The meaning is that after the first [makāra, wine] is the second [i.e., fish].

Accordingly meat becomes the third [makāra].

[The word] bhaktāni, enjoining the various types of food made from grains such as pulse-cakes, chick peas, etc., is the fourth [makāra].[12] Yoni [literally, womb] indicates the female organ and that suggests the fifth [makāra, namely maithuna or sexual intercourse].[13] The usage of yoni in the plural expresses the difference in castes (jāti) such as brahmana, kṣatriya and others. Supporting that interpretation are phrases like, "beginning with the eight types of groups (kula)" as is observed in the Tantras.[14] [The word] 'and' [in the Verse] indicates the combination of these five [makāras]. Even though [the word] meat is read after the word fish [in the Verse] it should be place before fish as is indicated by the [use of the] word adya, before. What is intended is that a [specific] order is to be followed for the makāras [in the ritual].

Therefore if the primary [substance of the makāra] is not available a substitute (pratinidhi) may be used according to the dictum, "In the even that [all] the five makāras are not available the daily worship should be performed." Even though this is established in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra what has been suggested is that when the preceding element is unavailable the succeeding ones, even if they are primary [and not substitutions], should not be used.[15]

Despite the unavailability of even the first [primary

substance of the *makāras*] according to the practice of the tradition (*sampradāyālabhyam*) one should use the fourth [*makāra*, that is, fermented grains (*mudrā*)] since this is considered essential for the sake of food offerings (*naivedyam*) [at the time of worship (*pūjā*)].

But if one accepts the reading "*ajyam*" [in the Verse instead of *adyam* as it is advised] according to other schools [of interpretation] then the meaning is only 'clarified butter' (*ghṛtam*) [and not 'before' as suggested here].[16] Then [if *ajam*] is taken to mean "cooked" then by the dictum of the crow's eye it is an epithet of both [fish and meat].[17] Furthermore it is not logical to explain [*ajam*] as [something] connected with goats (*aja*) [like goat's flesh]. A different meaning [for *ajam*] is seen in the Tantras and the enumeration of the five *makāras* as stated in the Verse is contradicted [if one reads *ajam* instead of *adyam*].[18]

The [use of wine] is enough to please (*tarpana*) the Supreme Deity, [and] the sacrifice (*yāga*) should be done with a substitute [for the first *makāra*]. In the external sacrifice by taking for oneself [the *makāras* and hence making the sacrifice complete] even in the absence of that [taking for oneself] there is nothing objectionable, as it is inferred by the sixth dictum.[19]

[The term] *supariṣkṛtāni* [literally, well-performed] means fulfilled [or perfected, *saṃskṛtāni*] by rites

(*samskāra*) visible and invisible. And these [visible and invisible rites] are mundane (*laukika*) when they take the form of cooking, etc., and Vedic [or extraordinary, *vaidika*] when they take the form of removing curses, etc. This is well established in many Tantras, or by the dictum stated in the [*Paraśurāma*-] *Kalpasūtra*, "Many or few [prescriptions] have been stated in one's own ritual text (*gṛhyasūtra*)."20

[The words in the Verse] *mahatyai devatayai* mean °to the Great Goddess'; 'offering food' (*nivedyan*) means sacrificing (*yajan*): 'the adept performer' (*sukṛti*) means the performer of the external sacrifice (*bahiryāgakartā*). 'Taking for oneself' (*svātmikṛtya*) means consuming them [that is, the offerings] oneself; 'accomplished' (*siddhim*) means one obtains the results of sacrifice (*yāgaphalam*).

By the sacrifice employing the five m's [*mapancaka*] beginning with the first and adding each successively, one should achieve the desired result of [identity with] the deity who is the Great Goddess.21 Thus it should be noted that the method by which this [Verse] has become an injunction (*vidhi*) [to use the five *makāras* rather than a mere statement concerning them] is comparable to the injunction to perform internal worship (*antaryāga*).

The Thirteenth Verse is said in order to instruct meditation on the deity [conceived of as] having qualities as an accessory to the sacrifice (*kṛvāngam*).

1. Bhāskararāya's description reverses the order in the verse, that is, the two breasts are placed above, below which is the face. The term *hakārārdha*, literally 'half the letter *ha*', indicates the female organ. The picture Bhāskararāya has in mind is as follows:

0 0
0

0

This generates a triangle with a central *bindu* representing the *trikoṇa* and *bindu* and also a representation of the female organ meditated upon in the *kāmakalādhyāna*.

2. *Saundaryalaharī*, 19abc.

3. Emend **sat** to **tad**.

4. *Sundarihṛdaya* is the *Yoginīhṛdaya*, 2.54cd. Bhāskararāya reads **maṇḍalātrayarūpantu** for **maṇḍalātrayayuktam**, the latter reading appearing in the Kaviraj's third edition (p.154).

5. Emend **śīrśādighantikaṇṭaḥ** to **śīrśādikaṇṭhāntaḥ** following Adyar and GOML.

6. Here Upanisadbrahmayogin reads *cikitvā* and glosses it as *dhyatvā*, 'thought' or 'reflection'. Bhāskararāya chooses the *viditvā* reading and gives it the same interpretation.

7. *Saundaryalaharī*, 19cdefgh, omitting the first word of cd, *harārdham*.

8. Emend **kāmarūptvakāmyatvakāmaḥ** to **kāmarūpatvakāmaḥ** following Adyar.

9. *Nityāsodaśikārnava*, 1.201. Note that the configuration of the *bījākṣara klīm* in the devanagari script is suggested as an esoteric form of the *kāmakalā*. Thus,

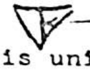
On *saparārdha* identified with the female organ as half the letter *ha* see *Vāmakeśvarīmata with the commentary of Rajanaka Jayāratha*, edited by M.K. Sastri, Srinagar, India, 1945. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, Vol.64, p.75.

10. Omit **annadyakāmanaphalakaveṣṭherīva** following GOML 2 and oral traditions.

11. This phrase occurs in neither the *Śaṇḍilya* or *Nārada Bhaktisūtras*.

12. Emend to place the **daṇḍa** after **caturtham** following Adyar.

13. The term **kundagolodbhava** is cryptic but according to oral traditions it refers to a portion of the female organ. The lexical meaning usually given is an illegitimate child while here the meaning is as a synonym for the female organ, the *yoni*.



14. The phrase is unidentified.

15. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, 1.24. Emend the text to read **nitykrama** for **nityakramam** and **pratyāvamṛṣthiḥ** for **pratyavamamṛṣthih** following GOML 2 and the Dave edition of the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (see bibliography for details).

16. Exactly to whom Bhāskararāya is referring is unclear. This is not the reading of either Upaniṣadbrahmayogin or Rāmānanda, nor has the possibility appeared in consulted manuscripts of the Upaniṣad.

17. This dictum is based on the supposition that a crow has only one eye that can move as the occasion permits from one socket to the other, suggesting that a word or a phrase used only once in a sentence can serve two purposes.

18. Emend **sutroktānāṃ** to **suktoktānāṃ**. This makes better sense since the reading of **ajam** would confuse the meaning of the verse. It is possible to retain the reading **sutroktānāṃ** and take it as referring to the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* verse cited above but this particular *sūtra* does not actually enumerate the *pañcamakāras*.

19. What Bhāskararāya means by the 'sixth dictum', *sasṭhanyaya* is unknown.

20. cf., *Paraśurāmakalpasutra*, 1.31, the full quotation of the text reads: **bahvalpaṃ ya svagṛhyoktaṃ yasya yāvat prakīrtītaṃ/ tasya tavati śastrārthe kṛte sarvaḥ kṛto' bhavet//**

The idea Bhāskararāya means to convey is that the rituals, their number and methods of performance differ according to which *gṛhyasūtra* is followed and this differs from family to family.

21. Emend **mahādevīdevatākeneṣthasiddhiṃ** to **mahādevīdevatā iṣthasiddhiṃ**. No available manuscripts offer a better reading.

[VERSE THIRTEEN]

> [She is] white and the Mother of the Universe. The desirous are bound by the noose [of their own desires].
>
> [She] strikes down with a bow and five arrows [desire]. [She is] red, the Primordial Power and [has a] Universal View [of all beings' *karma*].

[The words] "*sṛṇyeva sitayā*" [in the Verse] are in the third case [the word *srni* occurring as *srnya*, according to the Pāṇinian *sūtra*, 2.3.21] any characteristic indicating a state (or condition) is put in the instrumental case to express this relation.'[1] [The word] *sitayā* means white (*svetayā*), that is, consisting of silver: or because there is no difference between *sa* and *śa* [as in *sitayā*, then *śitayā*] can mean sharp (*nisitaya*), that is, a sharp instrument. *Sṛṇyā* means [the Goddess] is characterized, as it were, by having an elephant goad [in one of Her hands].[2] *Viśvajanya* [is to be analyzed as an exocentric (*bahuvṛīhi*) compound meaning] She is the Mother of the Universe because She is the One from whom everything is born.[3] *Aruṇā* [in the Verse] means possessing a red color (*lauhityavat*). [The words] Primordial Śakti (*ādiśakti*) mean [the Goddess] Mahātripurasundarī [who has a] universal view (*viśvacarśanī*) over the good and evil actions (*karma*) of all living beings.[4]

[The word] 'desirous' (*abhīkān*) means lustful persons, namely, low people who undertake [this] path due to their desirous or passionate nature [which is] binding

(*pratibandhaḥ*) [them]. [She, with] 'a bow' (*dhanuṣa*) 'with five arrows' (*pañcabhīrisubhīr*) pierces [the desires, that is, causes them to fall (*vidhyati*)].5

Those who without desires, having a sharp intellect (*vaidhadhīya*) undertake [this path] are uplifted, and because this matter is clear it is not repeated here. It is said:

> One should serve [Her] only with the known injunctions. If one [serves] with desire She causes them to fall. Those substances by which one falls are the very same ones through which one gains liberation. For the lustful and those without lust these paths are established.6

Yāska [the Vedic grammarian] says [the word] "*sṛṇi*" has a twofold meaning [indicating] both protector and slayer.7

Construing the word "as it were" (*iva*) with all the words of the text, She appears [dualistically] out of compassion for Her devotees only imaginatively as having qualities, while what is suggested is that ultimately Her form is qualitiless.

The Fourteenth Verse is said in order to instruct the equality of male and female forms as conceptualized with qualities.

[VERSE FOURTEEN]

> The Prosperous (*bhāga*) [Lord] is the Blessed Śakti who is both Desire and the Lord [that is, Śiva]. [Śiva and Śakti are] the two givers in this [contemplative worship] of prosperity.
>
> [These] two are the same substance, have the same nature, are completely identical and of equal power. [She is] without decay [and] the Womb of the Universe, [the Creator].

[The word] *bhāga* [in the Verse] is a synonym for Lord (*Īśa*). [So it is said in the *Viṣṇupurāna*:]

> There are six considered [attributes of] *Bhāga* [the Lord]: empowerment (*aiśvarya*), Dharma, fame, prosperity, knowledge (*jñāna*) and discrimination (*vijñāna*).[8]

In such scriptures (*smṛti*) the various qualities that make up the body of the Lord are all designated here by the word *bhāga*.[9] Śakti [the Goddess] is said to be that very collection of qualities (*dharmasamuha*). This is the very form (*svarūpa*) of the deity in feminine form described for the sake of contemplative worship (*upāsyatvena*). It has been said in the *Nagānandasūtra* that Brahman [the Absolute] whose nature is luminosity (*prakāśātmanaḥ*) takes Reflection (*vimarśa*) as its intrinsic nature: in the Āgamas [Reflection] is described as the nature of consciousness within conscious beings, born out of its own essence; [it is] Supreme Speech (*para vāk*), independent (*svatantryam*), the Supreme Self, [and] empowers (*aiśvarya*); [it has] reality (*satattvam*), being (*satta*), effulgence (*sphuratta*), essence (*sārā*); [She is] the Little Mother Mālinī, is in the image of the heart, self-consciousness (*svasamvit*) and active (*spanda*). The explanation of these special qualities is to be seen only in the commentary [on the *Nagānandasūtras*][10]

The Blessed (*bhagavan*) [in the Verse] means the

one qualified by that collection of qualities [listed above].11 'Desire' (*kāma*) and 'Lord' (*Īśa*) refer to Kamesvara [the Lord of Desire] who alone is the masculine form of the deity that is worshipped (*upāsyadevatā*). [The word] here' (*iha*) means in this contemplative worship (*upāsanayam*) of prosperity (*saubhāganam*) which is of the forms of Dharma, wealth and desire [the human objectives and] yields various fruits. Even though there are two givers (*datarau*) [stated in the Verse] the deity is only one; though it is twofold [in masculine and feminine aspects] when meditated upon as having qualities, [this is for the sake of] accomplishing the three aims [of human existence, Dharma, wealth and desire]. This is the meaning [of the Verse].

'*Sampradhānau*' [and] '*samasattvau*' meaning 'the two are of equal importance' [have the same meaning]. The word *sattva* means a quality and by that is meant the [two] exist in the relationship of quality and qualified. What is intended is that in the meditation (*dhyāna*) the fact that Kāmeśvarī (Śakti) is seated on the lap of Kāmeśvara (Siva) indicates that Śiva is the base (*ādhāra*), [He] is the quality (*guṇa*) and Śakti is the substance (*pradhānam*). But in the meditation in which Ambikā is joined with Śiva as half [His body] because of the special form [sharing] head, hands, feet and other limbs, Śakti is the quality (*guṇa*) and Śiva is the substance (*pradhānam*).12 Thus though they are

equal in granting [their devotees] what is desired [and] are related to one another as quality and substance, [Śiva] is His aspect [*ansaḥ*] as Creator of the Universe is dependent upon Śakti.[13] 'The sameness of the two' (*samotayor*) is said [in the Verse] to suggest that meditating on only the feminine aspect one achieves the result. [*Samotayor* is grammatically explained as meaning] of the two completely (*samyak*) undivided mutually a joining of the two (*tayor*) as half Śiva and half Śakti is the form of *Ardhanarīśvara*. 'Equal power' (*samaśakti*) means the All-Powerful Goddess who is a collection of all (*nikhila*) qualities, [She alone] is the Womb of the Universe (*viśvayoni*), Maker of the Universe. To illustrate this the *Śaktisūtra* says,

> The Conscious One (*citih*) is independently the cause for the establishment of the universe.[14]

It is established in verses such as, "Desiring to protect us from all (*sāmāsmād*) who would harm us", that the word *sāme* is a synonym for all (*sarva*).[15] "Without decay" (*ajarā*) is an adjective [applied to the Goddess] in Her aspect as the Womb of the Universe (*viśvayoni*) [that is, as its Creator]. The meaning is that as the Maker of the Universe (*jagatkartṛ*) She is the Natural Order (*ṛta*) because She is known by valid means of cognition such as perception, etc., about which there can be no doubt. So it has been said in the *Devībhāgavata*,

> Śakti creates the Universal Egg (*brahmānda*),
> She protects, verily, everything. By Her own
> desire She collects this universe of moving and

> unmoving [things]. Not Viṣṇu nor Śiva, nor Indra, Brahma or Agni, not Sūrya nor Varunā are capable in their own right of anything [without Her]. Those gods perform their own work having been united with Her. That [She is] the cause for all actions is understood by sense perception (pratyakṣa) [a valid means of cognition].[16]

Also elsewhere [in the *Devībhāgavata* it is said]:

> Even Śiva becomes a corpse when separated from Kunḍalinī. The wise know that one bereft of Śakti is capable of nothing.[17]

Details are to be seen in the *Setubandha* [my commentary on the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*].[18] Therefore even though Śiva can confer fruits, because He is depending upon Śakti, it is a bit delayed; but in respect to Śakti [since She is] not depending on anyone there is no delay.[19] Those who desire to achieve results quickly should meditate on the deity only in the feminine form.

Thus having stated the twofold meditation on [the deities when considered] with qualities, because there has been no mention of the aspect to be meditated upon as qualitiless, the fifteenth verse is said to instruct that [qualitiless meditation] and the means by which that [meditation is accomplished].[20]

[VERSE FIFTEEN]

> Purified [by rituals and mantras], by offerings (*havīśa*), by drinking, by the mind's [efforts], indeed [all] the limitations [on Self Realization] are dissolved.
>
> [The Self of] All is [called] the Creator of all the World, Maintainer [and] Destroyer, the Form of the Universe.

Those who have written the texts have stated that the various methods [described] in the active path (karmamārga), the knowledge path (jñānamārga) and the path of devotion (bhaktimārga) are mutually contradictory. It is clear to those who know the texts that all those [methods described], because they are difficult to practice, yield results only over a long period. And hence the only method [that is truly effective proceeds through] a series of stages (ullāsa) adopted through repeated practice and the taking of ritual offerings for oneself [that is, ingesting them]. In this respect the rules formulated should be [followed] up to the mature-stage (praudhollāsa), after which it is as you please; in the last stage you obtain Brahman's own form (brahmasvarūpata).[21] And this is further illustrated in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra:

> Among the [seven] stages, namely, the initial, incipient, youthful, mature, the end of the mature, the detached and stateless stages, the rules of conduct are to be followed only up to the mature stage and afterwards as you please.[22]

Descriptions of the sevenfold stages are to be seen in the Kulārṇava and other [Tantras].[23]

Even though everyday the very form of Brahman is obtained in deep sleep, because of the dissolution of the mind [such that one has no cognition of oneself] and likewise because there is a connection with sleep as a special form of the development of ignorance, that [Brahman experience] is not [regarded ordinarily] as a human aim.[24]

That state bereft of sleep in the usual sense is a human aim as the level of knowledge the wise consider the seventh [stage]. The Yogis experience that [seventh stage] known as equipoise devoid of concepts (nirvikalpasamādhitvena); and that state is experienced by the Yogis as the stage beyond the detached [stage] and as having the form of the stateless (anavasthā) [stage].[25] It has been said:

> The form of Brahman is bliss and that is established in the body. The [ritual] substances which manifest that [bliss] are drunk by the Yogis.[26]

But in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra the manifestor of this [bliss] is said to be the five makāras.[27] However if the substances not being ritually used [and so considered] impure (apavitram) are drunk then because they actively obstruct the aims of human life, they bind one to sin [and] are not capable of inducing that state [of bliss]. In the Samayācārasmṛti it has been said:

> (A) The impure drink of ordinary persons produces quarrellsomeness, anxiety and sin. That which is without ritual mantras is only ordinary drink.
>
> (B) Having drunk according to the prescriptions of ordinary drink even the hero goes to hell. Purified (saṃskṛta) [drink] is enlightening, expiating and makes pure (suddhikṛt).
>
> (C) By this [purification] there is destroyed [what is ordinarily] great degeneration and revelation (sphuraṇam) of mantras [occurs]. From purified drink [one obtains] long life, auspiciousness (śrīḥ), distinction (kānti), prosperity (saubhāgyam), knowledge (jñāna), the eight types of empowerment and the ability to fly. A Brahmana should drink liquor in the sautramani [sacrifice which is part of the Vedic soma

> sacrifice] and at the time of ritual worship (kulācāra).
>
> (D) Otherwise having drunk out of desire one ought to perform an expiation (prayāścittam).[28]

But,

> Better that the vital breaths go [that is, one dies] but a Brahmana should not offer liquor [in ritual].
>
> A Brahmana who offers liquor becomes stripped of his Brahmanhood.[29]

Because of restrictions such as these stated in the Śaktisaṃgama Tantra and the Tantrarāja Tantra, the means by which one overcomes the entanglements in Dharma are to be understood only from tradition.[30] And the methods of establishing [the means to overcome the entanglements in Dharma that arise due to these contradictory statements in the scriptures] have been explained by me in the commentary on the Kaulopaniṣad.[31] Therefore those qualified persons who have attained the [higher] stages [realize] the individual self (jīvātman) is different than the inner mental process (antaḥkaraṇa); when the obstacles of the inner mental process are removed and the experience of Brahman [is obtained], what else remains [for one to achieve]?

And one should not say that their aim was not obtained because of the temporariness of the stage [reached by use of] substances [such as wine]. This also applies to meditative concentration (samādhi). In this regard [it should be noted that] by methods such as controlling the

breath one enters into meditative concentration (*samādhi*) again and again by the proficiency gained over a period of time; after some time even without breath control one obtains permanent meditative concentration. So its said that those who board a boat on the ocean feel a swaying back and forth due to [motion of] the waves and when they alight from the boat the feeling a swaying continues; likewise in the present contexts, by the proficiency established [through the attainment of the] detached (*unmānī*) and stateless (*anavasthā*) [stages] by drinking purified substances [such as ritually consecrated wine], even without the substances, after a few days a similar state not [liquor] induced is accomplished.

The meaning of the words [in the Verse is as follows]: Purified (*pavitena*) by rituals and mantras, by what is left over after the worship of the Goddess (*navīśa*), by drinking (*pariśruta*), [by what is] born out of the internal mental process (*manastaḥ*), the limitation (*samkoce*) of [attaining Self-realization] being dissolved by inactivity, one [attains] the stateless [stage] following the stage of detachment. This is to paraphrase [the Verse]. [The particle] *vai* [means] certainly, [thus] one becomes the Self of all (*sarva*). This is to summarize [the meaning].

Therefore the meaning of the verbal root √ *mad* [°to be intoxicated'] in statements taken as injunctions for internal sacrifice [indicates inducing the bliss] of

conceptionlessness in which the only object is one's Self. It is only with this intention that the various types of intoxication are explained in the Tantras,

> Those intoxicated, having drunk, become passionate; those passionate become angry.
> Singers sing having drunk, Yogins who have drunk meditate.[32]

What is intended is that a special [type of] Yogi achieves that [meditative state] with this help.

The nature of the Self of all is explained [to mean that] Brahma is [as the Verse calls Him] the Creator of all the World (*sarvasya jagato vidhāta*); the Maintainer (*dhārta*) means Viṣṇu, the Destroyer (*hārta*) means Rudra (i.e., Śiva). Why should one unnecessarily elaborate? A slave, a fisherman, a cheat, every living being is that [Self of all in] "the form of the universe" [as the Verse says]. So let the body fall by its accumulated [karma] anytime, anywhere, there is nothing special about it, because what is to be accomplished has already been accomplished: this is the intention. It has been said in the [*Paraśurāma-*] *Kalpasūtra*,

> Knowing in this way, one who has performed according to injunctions [the rituals and is] established in the [Tantric] practice, being one who has done what is to be done in all respects, if he leaves the body in the house of a butcher or in Kasi [the holy city] there is no difference: He is liberated while yet living.[33]

Now the sixteenth and final verse concluding what has been described as the doctrine regarding [the Goddess]

Tripura is said in order to instruct the fruit that arises from studying it.

[VERSE SIXTEEN]

> This is the great Upaniṣad [in the form of statements expounding the secret meaning] of [the goddess] Tripura. The Supreme Indestructible [Brahma] praises that [Upaniṣad] which is the Supreme Knowledge this Ṛg [*Veda* source] and the *Yajur*, *Sāma*, *Atharva* [*Vedas*] and other [sources contain]. *AUM* I

This [Upaniṣad] has been elaborated by the author of the [*Paraśurāma-*] *Kalpasūtra*, the Lord Sri Paraśurāma,

> "One who studies this Great Upanisad since it is the entire essence of the doctrine of the Great Traipura [the Goddess] becomes the sacrificer of all sacrifices. Whatever sacrifice is studied is obtained as desired with the sacrifice of this [Upaniṣad]." So it is revealed [concluding with the words] "Upaniṣad" [and] "auspiciousness".[34]

By this [quotation it should be understood that] whatever has not been stated or is lacking in this Upaniṣad, the meanings are to be taken from the [*Paraśurāma-*] *Kalpasūtra*. It is established in the sections of the [*Parasurāma-*] *Kalpasūtra* [designed] for those incapable of collecting the parts [of the teaching] scattered according to the different [Vedic] schools, to assert the authority of this treatise on practical matters.

The meanings of the words [in the Verse is as follows]: This (*iyam*), that is, the Great Upaniṣad "in the form of statements expounding the secret meaning" of Tripurā is to

be supplied [to make sense of the Verse]. The reason for this is stated [in the words] beginning with "that which" (yam) [in the Verse]. 'The Supreme Indestructible' (paramākṣaram) means Brahma, the Agent; 'that which' (yam) means the Upanisad; 'with praising [words]' (girbhiḥ) 'he praises' (itte). Iḍa is used in the sense of "praising" (stutau); [in determining the grammatical form] parame, supreme, [as being in the locative singular case] -se is the substitute for -su in the [case of the grammar of the] Vedas.[35] By interchanging [the grammatical declension of] the second case-ending [that is, the accusative form] yam with the first case-ending [nominative] Brahma [the Verse can be interpreted to mean] either praising the author of the Upanisad or as the author praising Brahman. The meaning is that either the praising is done by Parameśvara or it is He who is being praised, or it is that knowledge praises Tripurā [the Goddess]. Or [the word parame] can be divided as 'param' [and] 'e' which means the syllable [or the indestructible (akṣara)] has the form of the letter 'e'. So it is said:

> It is seen even today that the letter 'e' is the seed and the basis for the emergence of the three triangles from the Universal Egg to the mound of earth.[36]

Even the letter 'e' can be divided into 'a' plus 'i' because it is said in the scriptures that "the letter 'a' is verily the entire speech", "if one hears 'i', one hears it

without 'ka' and 'la'." Or [it may be interpreted that] the supreme Aum [is construed] as the letter 'a' in a special manner.[37] The meaning is that [Aum] being the combination of 'a','u' and 'm' as supreme and undivided praises.[38] It is recalled in the Śivarahasya, "The word Aum contains what is compounded or individual, O Giver of Protection."[39]

"One should study one's own chapters [of the Vedas]" [and because of that injunction] one reads their own [prescribed] chapters [and what is obtained] is that one gains [liberation] from this [Upanisad].[40] [This is what is suggested by the word] 'this' (eṣa) [in the Verse]. According to the reading of the Atharva school and others, the words 'Ṛg', etc., mean the Vedas and not individual mantras. The words eṣa, etad, and ayam [all literally meaning 'this'] refer to the Rg, Yajur and Atharva [Vedas] in a special way. The Sāma [Veda] by virtue of its being sung and not being, as it were, syllables [is suggested by] the word iti [used here to mean 'thus'] suggesting that its results (phalam) are equal to those [other Vedas occurring] in syllables.

Among the eighteen vidyās [that is, traditional sciences] only four are mentioned here, by the word 'other' (anya) the [remaining] fourteen are indicated. The meaning is that this Upanisad has for its very form (svarūpa) everything.

The very form (svarūpa) of the praṇava also [is

intended] so [the text says] Aum. [By the Paninian rule], "omanośca" it is the form of the subsequent letter [which is retained thus the Verse reads vidyā om rather than combining, according to sandhi rules, to vidyaum].41 Therefore the [esoteric] sense is that [this Upanisad] should be studied even by mendicants [since it contains Om, the mantra specially prescribed for them].

This Upaniṣad is of this nature [namely of the fourteen vidyās, Oṃ, the four Vedas, etc.,] the greatness of which even the scriptures are not capable of describing. This [Upaniṣad] because it is of the form of Brahman in which words cannot begin [to describe its greatness] so the scriptures with this intention [in mind] prefer to remain silent. [The words] ityupaniṣad means [the Upaniṣad] concludes. The intention is that more than this secret cannot be revealed.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Thus the meaning of this Great Upaniṣad of Tripurā even though it cannot be revealed [truly in the written word] has been partially stated by Śrī Bhāskararāya, a Knower of the Agni [Sacrifices of the Vedas] for the sake of the learned.

Thus the Commentary on the Tripurāmahopaniṣad by Bhāskararāya is complete. [Let there be] Prosperity !

1. cf., *The Astadhyāyī of Pānini*, edited and translated by S.C. Vasu. Delhī: Motilal Banarsīdass, reprint edition 1980, Vol.I, p.286.

2. Emend **ṣṛṇyam'kuśenevopalakṣita** to **ṣṛṇyankusenevopalākṣita** following Adyar.

3. Emend **viśvajagajjanani** to **jagajjanani** following Adyar and GOML.

4. Taking the word **mātra**, only or merely, in **praṇimātrasya** to mean **sarva**, all.

5. cf., *Lalitāsahasranāma*, n.10 and n.11 with the *Saubhagyabhāskara*.

Read *vidhyati* as derived from the sixth class root √vidh, in the sense of 'to pierce'. Either the form is made to appear deliberately archaic (as are many terms in the Upanisad) or it should be emended to *vidhati* to conform to the sixth class. Upaniṣadbrahmayogin reads *viddhati*.

6. Only the last portion of the first line of the quoted verses beginning with **trsnaya cetsa patāki** has been identified. It is *Kulārṇava Tántra*, 10.6.

7. This has not been found in Yāska.

8. *Visnupurāṇa*, 6.75.74 with the following emendations: Read *vīryasya* for **dharmasya**; **jñānavairāgyoścaiva** for **jñānavijñāyoścaiva**. cf., *SrīvīṣṇupurāṆam*, edited by Sampatkumaracarya. Kanchipuram, India: Granthamalakaryalaya, 1971.

9. Emend **śarīraghatako** to **śarīraghatakayova** following Adyar.

10. The *Nagānandasūtras* are unidentified.
Emend **hṛdayāmūrmiḥ** to **hṛdayāmūrtiḥ** following Adyar.

11. Emend **tadṛśadharmaviśiṣṭha** to **tadṛśadharmasamuhaviśiṣṭha** following Adyar.

12. The explanation seems a bit confused and variant readings offer no immediate solution. In the previous sentence Siva is the basis (*ādhāra*) and it would follow that He is the substance (*pradhānam*), that is, the qualified (*guṇi*) rather than the quality (*guṇa*). When Śakti is half His body, the idea being the *figure* of Ardhanarīśvara, She should be the substance (*pradhānam*).

13. cf., *Saundaryalaharī*, 1.

14. The *Śaktisūtras* have been unavailable for review.

15. The meaning of the verse quoted is not clear but it is likely to be found in either the Ṛg or Atharva Vedas, cf., Ṛg Veda, 6.44.7 where the word urūṣya occurs. The intended meaning of sāma, however, is perfectly clear.

16. Emend Bhāgavata to Devībhāgavata following Adyar and GOML. The passage has not been located.

17. This has not been located in the Devībhāgavatam.

18. cf., Setubandha on the Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.10-11 where Bhāskararāya quotes a passage reading, śaktya śive sūkṣmenamadhama na vidyate iti pūrvamuktatvāt.
Emend viseṣah to vistaraḥ following Adyar and GOML.

19. Emend śaktyādhinatvādhilambitaṃ to śaktyādinavādisadvialmitam following Adyar; also emend sighraprasiddikāmaiḥ to sighrasiddhikāmaiḥ following Adyar and GOML.

20. Emend saguṇadhyānamuktva to saguṇadhyānadvayamuktva following GOML 2.

21. On the stages in the liberative process see Part One.

22. PKS, 10.68.

23. cf., Kulārṇava Tantra, 1ff.

24. Emend to add suśuptdāsāyām after pratidīnaṃ; also emend sa to saḥ.

25. Emend nirvikalpasambandhitvena to nirvikalpasamādhitvena.

26. Kulārṇava Tantra, 5.80.

27. PKS, 1.12.

28. The Samayācārasmrti is unidentified. See the note above for details.
The sautramani is part of the soma sacrifice, see Keith. A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925, pp.352-359.
Portions of this quotation occur in Kulārnava Tantra; (B) is Kulārnava Tantra, 5.93 and cd of (C) is 6.31.
Emend brāhmanaḥ to kāmataḥ following GOML.

29. Unidentified verse, according to oral traditions it belongs to the *Hamsamahesvara Tantra* though no manuscript confirms this fact.

Emend param to **varam**; also **pragacchantu** to **prayacchantu** following GOML.

30. cf., *Tantrarāja Tantra*, 1.82-83. Note that the verse quoted above does not occur in either editions of *Tantraraja Tantra* or in the *Śaktisaṃgama Tantra*.

31. cf., Bhāskararāya's commentary following the line *adharmakāranam* in *Kaulopaniṣad*. He also refers here to the unidentified *Nagānandasūtraś*. See p.2 of the Avalon edition for details.

Emend **brahmābhave sati kimavaśiṣyate** to **brahmābhave kimavaśiṣyate** following GOML.

32. Unidentified verse.

In ab of the verse emend **mattah kupyati kopanaḥ** to **mattaḥ kupyanti kopanaḥ**; also in cd emend **kopinah** to **yoginah** following Adyar and GOML.

33. *PKS*, 10.82.

34. *PKS*, 10.83.

35. See Panini, 1.1.13 and also 7.1.39 for the true ending "*e*" as directed by the indicatory letter (*anubandha*) *s*.

36. *Nityāsodaśikārṇava*, 1.6. Bhāskararāya says here that the devanagarī letter *e* can be made to look like a triangle, thus:

Furthermore, by the three triangles he means the three major inner triangles that combine to form the *trikona* and *vasukoṇa* sub-cakras.

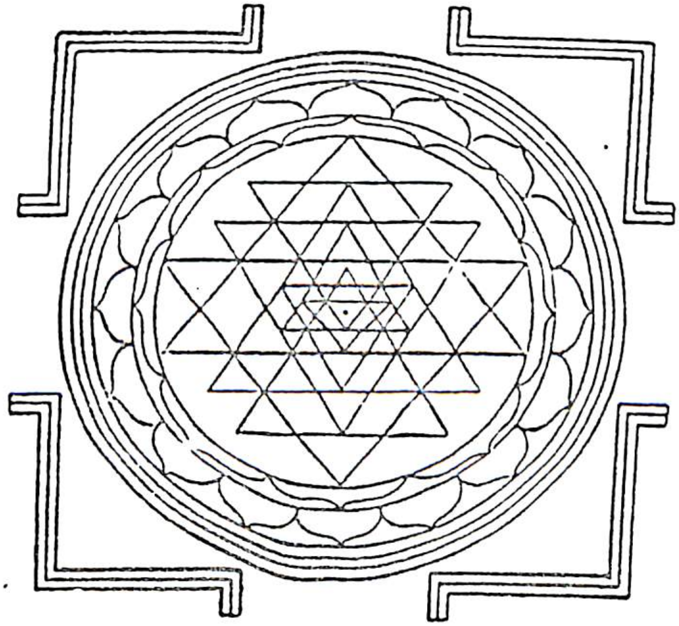
37. cf., *Ṛg Veda*, 10.71.6; also **akaro vai sarva vak** occurs as *Aitareya Aranyaka*, 2.3.6. Sivānanda in his *Ṛjuvimarśinī* on *Nityāsodaśikārnava*, 1.26 and again at 1.100 quotes this Vedic passage. The idea is that by hearing *ī* one actually hears the *bījāksara klīm* without the *k* and *l* sounds. Bhāskararāya in the *Setubandha* on *Nityāsodaśikārṇava*, 1.6 says *a* is Paramaśiva and *i* is Paraśakti and by their combination e is produced and that the combination is represented by the central three major triangles of the *śrīcakra*.

38. Emend **carama** to **parama** following Adyar.

39. The *Śivarahasya* is unidentified.

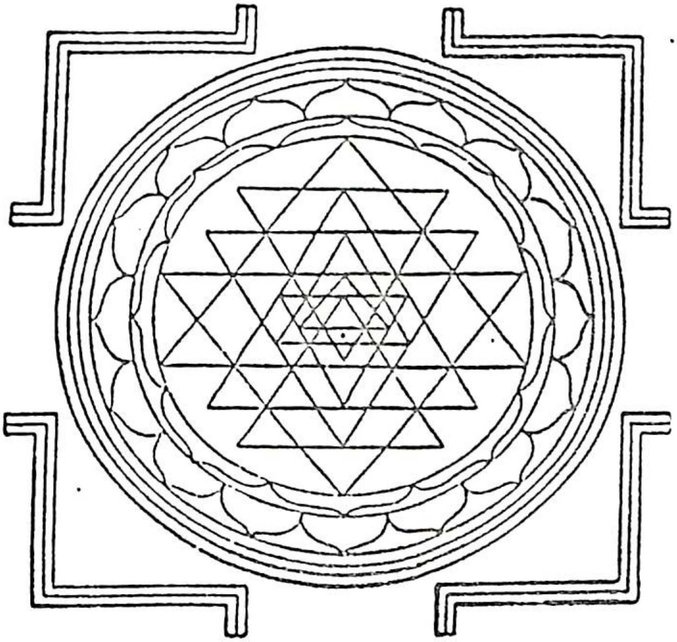
Appendix Two
Diagrams

The Śrīcakra According to Popular/Kaula Tradition



Appendix Two
Diagrams

The Śrīcakra According to the Samayācāra of Lakṣmīdhara



Appendix Three
Glossary

ācāra: "Practice", "conduct", "behavior", "custom", "teaching"; like other terms with a similar meaning, when **ācāra** is used in compound its preceding qualifier(s) indicates its specific sense.

advaita: lit., "non-dual", used to indicate the position of ultimate monism adopted by various schools of Indian thought. The two non-dualist schools of particular concern in the present study are the so-call pure non-dualists (**kevalādvaita**) led by the eighth-century Śaṅkarācārya and the Śākta Tantrics whose systems might best be termed non-dualistic theism. The two schools differ on many technical points but foremost is the contention of the Śāktas that the dualistic material world as perceived is not merely a product of ignorance (**avidyā**) but rather a product of the free will of God and that divinity is not a subordinate form (i.e., one "with qualities", the so-called *saguṇa* form) of the Absolute Brahman. Rather, the Śāktas adopt a position of original unity which transforms itself by its own free will into a real, dualistic universe of names and forms (**nāmarūpa**). Thus Śāktas adopt the position known as **pariṇāmavāda** or the doctrine of transformation which the **kevalādvaitins** reject.

ānanda: lit.,"bliss"; An attribute of the Absolute Brahman that is given prominence in Śākta Tantrism as a description of realization. In its ultimate form it is said to be an "unqualified bliss" differing from any mundane, conventional experience or description because it is (1) permanent and (2) lacks a recognition by the subject as a particular form of experience limited by sense awareness or mental impressions. Ānanda does, however, occur in various levels which are viewed hierarchically (that is, in the experiences of each successive *āmnaya*); more mundane feelings of pleasure are considered approximations of the experience occurring in the final stages of realization.

antaryāga: lit., "internal sacrifice"; A key concept in both Kaula and Samaya interpretations of Śrīvidyā and in Tantrism in general, **antaryāga** refers to the process by which all forms of overt action are transformed into mental, contemplative acts. According to some Śrīvidyā adepts, this transformation of "outward" action or "sacrifice" (i.e., **bahiryāgas**) into "inward" contemplation obviates the need to continue "outward" practices such as ritual and even meditation. This is the position of Lakṣmīdhara. Others,

such as Bhāskararāya, dispute this interpretation and maintain that "outward" acts are never abandoned in favor of pure contemplation.

adhikāra: lit., "qualification"; Any individual undertaking a Tantric spiritual discipline is rated by the guru according to ability, personal temperament, capacity to learn. The guru then responds with teachings deemed appropriate to the "qualification" of the student.

ardhahakāra: lit., "half the letter 'h'"; An obscure and technical term in Tantrism used to indicate the female organ both literally and symbolically as it is made a part of ritual and meditative practice. Presumably the term comes from the shape of the upper portion of the letter **h** as it occurs in the Devanagari script.

āvārana: lit., "obstruction"; Used in Śrīvidyā in the compound **navāvāraṇa** or "nine obstructions" to indicate the nine passages or stages in the **śrīcakra** that are identified with the nine sub-cakras. The idea is that each **āvāraṇa** is overcome by ascending stages of ritual and contemplation as the adept moves towards the goal of union symbolized in the **bindu** at the center of the **śrīcakra**.

bahiryāga: lit., "external sacrifice"; Any type of ritual, performance, verbal or mental effort which involves material elements and explicit actions part of the spiritual discipline. In Śrīvidyā, forms of **bahiryāga** are said to be transformed into "internal sacrifice" (**antaryāga**) in a gradual process of ritual assimilation and contemplative practice.

bhāṣya: lit., "commentary"; Any written or verbal commentary on texts or oral teachings. A variation of this word, **bhāṣa**, is used in the compound **sandhyabhāṣa** or "twilight language". This purposefully metaphorical, shadowy language, prominent in Buddhist texts, is used to conceal and encode Tantric materials in order to prevent their use or comprehension by non-initiates. It is not favored by Hindu Tantrics who prefer a technical vocabulary that frequently attributes specific meanings to common words.

bhakti: lit., "loving devotion"; One of the most common and important concepts in Hinduism. In general **bhakti** refers to the reciprocal relationship of love, friendship and reliance existing between a devotee and a divinity. In the case of Śrīvidyā, bhakti plays a central role in virtually all forms of ritual expression and as a key element in personal faith.

The central object of devotion is the beneficent figure of the goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī.

bhūprasatāra: lit.,"spread over the earth"; The term refers specifically to the two-dimensional form of the **śrīcakra** either as it is written in a temporary form on the physical earth or on some other object, or as it is inscribed on some more permanent substance such as a sheet of five metals (**pañcalokam**).

bindu: lit., "drop"; In the most specific and common sense of the term, **bindu** refers to the central point within the **śrīcakra** symbolizing the non-dual nature of the union of Śiva and Śakti. It can also refer to semen in esoteric discussions of certain ritual performances practiced by Kaula adepts.

cidākāśarahasya: lit., "the secret of consciousness and space"; This is the so-called **Cidambaram rahasya** or "secret of Cidambaram", that is, the **yantra** of the dancing form of Śiva known as Naṭarāja ("King of Dance") as it is found in the temple dedicated to this god in Citamparam, Tamil Nāḍu. The term itself is given various esoteric meanings. Cf., Chamu, S.V., The Divine Dancer. Mysore: Astanga Yoga Vijñāna Mandiram, 1982.

dakṣinācāra: lit., "right (-hand) practice"; As Lakṣmīdhara understands it this term indicates Tantric practices which do not employ any ordinarily prohibited substances, such as the **pañcamakāras**, or promote any form of worship which may lead to a breach in the conventional standards of orthodoxy associated with high-caste behavior (such as the **kāmakalā** meditation). Lakṣmīdhara's is the "popular" sense of term though it is not universally accepted; Bhāskararāya, for example, rejects this meaning perhaps because as a Brahmin he did not consider himself outside the orthodox fold and yet did not feel constrained by these prohibitions. Bhāskararāya suggests the difference between the so-called "right" and "left-handed" practices is based on a technical understanding of different levels of spiritual awareness.

darśana: or **darśan**, lit., "sight"; Referring the practice of coming within the view of any respected figure including within view of an image or god. **Darśan** has been treated elsewhere (See reference to Eck, Diana L. in Bibliography) but key to our understanding is that a **darśan** is an exchange of glances, both a "seeing" and a "being seen".

deśācāra: lit., "custom of the region"; An especially important concept for understanding the ways in which

Śrīvidyā manifests in particular places by adopting and assimilating into local culture. Many of the practices common to Śrīvidyā in a particular area are without a Sanskritic or pan-Indian basis and thus indicate the influence of local or regional factors.

dhyānaśloka: lit., "meditation verse"; These poetic verses describe the physical and sometimes metaphysical characteristics of particular aspects of Hindu divinities. They are the centerpiece of meditative efforts and are usually associated with particular mantric aspects of a god as well. The most common of the **dhyānaślokas** of Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī has been given in the chapter concerning her **sthūla** or physical form.

dīkṣā: lit., "initiation"; The necessary first step in any Tantric spiritual discipline is to gain access to teaching through a qualified teacher (usually defined as descending from a lineage of least three traceable generations) and thus any instruction within this formal relationship can be considered part of the initiation process. **Dīkṣā** itself usually refers to the specific giving of mantras that officially recognizes the participation of an individual within a lineage of teachings and teachers.

dīkṣanāma: lit., "initiated name"; A "special" name given at initiation into the Śrīvidyā mantra that becomes the spiritual identity of an individual in his or her capacity as a qualified adept. Many historical figures in Srividya tradition are known only by their **dīksānāmas** rather than by their given names. While the concept is adopted into Śrīvidyā from an ancient and common Vedic practice, all the **dīksanāmas** in Srīvidyā end with the epithet **-ānandanātha** (lit., "blissful lord") though the **-nātha** portion is sometimes dropped. See PKS, 1.40 where this is specified as an injunction. The tradition continues up to the present though in some lineages **dīkṣānāmas** are considered optional and may not be given.

dvija: lit., "twice-born"; Refers to any member of the upper three estates (the so-called **traivarnikas**) of ancient Aryan society because of a rite of passage in which they receive a form of Vedic initiation and are thus "born again" into the Vedic life. Though the particular ritual is limited to males, the term applies to both genders of these high castes. In contemporary Tamil Nāḍu the term effectively applies only to Brahmins. One of Tantrism's major characteristics is that it does not limit access to initiation on the basis of a "twice-born" birth.

gāyatrī: In general, a Vedic meter of twenty-four syllables but specifically the name of a mantra which is actually a verse from the Ṛg Veda (see 3.62.10) and considered the most sacred of all Vedic utterances. On the structure of this verse is built any number of other **gāyatrīs** for other divinities; a common practice among Tantrics and especially prevalent with respect to mantras ascribed to local aspects of divinity.

hādi: lit., "beginning with **ha**"; The term used for the so-called Lopamudrā tradition and the specific version of the Śrīvidyā mantra associated with it because it begins with the syllable **ha**. Though there is some controversy over the exact form of the mantra there is a consensus at least that it begins with the syllable **ha**.

iṣṭadevata: lit., "the desired (or chosen) deity"; Namely that specific aspect of a deity favored by an individual and singled out as representative of the general concept of God. Thus, at one level, Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī is the **iṣṭadevata** of Śrīvidyā tradition inasmuch as she represents the chosen form of the supreme Śakti. But each Śrīvidyā adept may identify a local goddess, such as Madurai Mīṇākṣī, as their own **iṣṭadevata** and hence take that version to represent both Lalitā and Parāśakti.

jñāna: lit., "knowledge"; In Śrīvidyā, as in other non-dualist schools, **jñāna** is the liberative insight one gains through spiritual discipline in which the individual soul (ātman) it seen as identical to the Absolute.

kādi: lit., "beginning with **ka**"; The Śrīvidyā mantra in its most popular form begins either its fifteen or sixteen syllable form with **ka**. This is the so-called Kāmarāja or Manmatha tradition in which the mantra's form was fixed and passed in a lineage descending from Śiva in his Kāmarāja aspect.

kailāsa: The name of the mountain home of Śiva and Kubera but represented in Śrīvidyā by the three-dimensional form of the **śrīcakra**. Thus any three-dimensional **śrīcakra** is sometimes called a **kailāsa** cakra. **Meru** and **sumeru** are identical terms for the same concept.

kalā: lit., "aspect", "part", "bit", "digit of the moon"; Used in a number of ways in Śākta Tantrism, the basic sense relates to the division of the phases of the moon into sixteen portions. These sixteen aspects are identified with various other parts of the **śrīcakra**, the human body and the universe.

kāmakalā(dhyāna): lit., "(meditation) on the aspect of desire"; A technical reference to a complex form of meditation in which the female organ becomes literally or figuratively the center of ritual attentions. This is a central part of the Kaula tradition's worship and is performed in order to emphasize the overcoming and restraint of sensual pleasures and the proximate bliss of sexual relations to that of the final realization of the Absolute. Samaya and other conservative elements within Srīvidyā reject this form of meditation either outright or as an external form (i.e., as a **bahiryāga**) of practice.

khaḍgamālā: lit., "the garland of the sword"; Actually a list of the names of the various deities of the **śrīcakra** in the order of their identification. The **khaḍgamālā** is recited as a contemplative act of devotion or as a substitute for more elaborate forms of **śrīcakra** worship. The recital of the **khaḍgamālā** is one of the most popular forms of worship in contemporary traditions. It takes its name from the sword symbolizing the goddess's power to strike down desire, hatred and delusion; the names themselves are, in the words of one adept, "strung together like flowers on a garland."

kuladevata: lit., "the deity of the **kula** (or family)"; This is the particular aspect of divinity favored within specific groups---all designated by the encompassing term "**kula**". Thus one of the names for Śrīvidyā is **Śrīkula** and the **kuladevata** is Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī; it may also refer to a particular family's chosen deity or the traditional deity associated with the village of their origin.

kuṇdalinī: lit., "winding", "spiral"; The esoteric term used to refer to the latent spiritual power envisioned in the form of a snake wound three times about the spiritual center (**mūlādhara cakra**) at the base of the spine. In the processes of **kuṇḍalinī yoga** this power, identified with Sakti, gradually rises up the central channel (i.e., the main **nāḍī** called the **sūṣumṇā**) of the body (located in the region of the spine) and passes through six (or in Śrīvidyā, nine) particular centers called **cakras**. Upon reaching uppermost center (though technically not considered a **cakra**) the **sahasradalapadma**, literally the thousand petalled lotus, **kuṇḍalinī** is said to be fully extended and hence in perfect union with Śiva who resides at the pericap of the skull. This esoteric physiology partly explains the various levels of spiritual and material achievement associated with continuing yogic practice and links physical forms of practice with mental counterparts.

kūṭa: lit., "peak"; Used in Śrīvidyā to refer to the three portions or "peaks" of the Śrīvidyā mantra.

madya: lit., "wine"; One of the five prohibited substances, that is, one of the **pañcamakāras** or **mapañcakas**. Used as a part of Tantric ritual wine is intended to approximate the feeling of well-being that is associated with the final bliss (ānanda) of realization. As any intoxication, ritual or otherwise, deliberately violates the norms of high caste behavior and the use of wine thus distinguishes this ritual practice as a "higher qualification" according to its Kaula Tantrics proponents.

madhyamā: lit., "the middle"; In Tantrism this term is used technically to indicate the second stage in the devolution of sound from its primordial source. Creation is viewed as a product of Brahman in the form of sound and thus **madhyamā** refers to that stage in which sound is at the stage of meta-language and is considered in nearly all respects still pre-articulated. Mantras are the only emanation of this stage of sound considered to have an articulated physical form.

maithuna: lit., "sexual intercourse"; The fifth and most controversial of the **pañcamakāras** or five prohibited substances. Many Tantric schools, including elements within Śrīvidyā, advocated ritual sexual intercourse as an reenactment of the primordial union of Śiva and Śakti. In many cases the wife of the adept is worshipped as the goddess with the culmination of worship being copulation; in other cases, intercourse with unknown women is "preferred". Though accepted and even advocated by a number of contemporary lineages, the practice of the fifth **makāra** is seen to be extremely limited (if at all present) in south India. Many conservative lineages either reject its appropriateness outright or claim that the superior qualification required for its practice is no longer found.

māmsa: lit., "meat"; The second of the **pañcamakāras**, the ritual ingestion of meat in violation of the usual standards of Hindu orthodoxy is another aspect of Tantrism's deliberate effort to go beyond the limits of ordinary convention in order to bring about a sudden and radical personal transformation.

mantraśāstra: lit., "treatises (or teachings) on mantras"; The body of literature and teachings that list, codify and explain the use and formulation of mantras. Śrīvidyā adepts have gained renown for their knowledge and mastery of the **mantraśāstra**.

mata: lit., "conviction", "tradition", "school", "doctrine"; One of many terms indicating these meanings (others include ācāra, sampradāya, mārga, kranta, etc.), **mata** is usually attached to the terms kādi and hādi in order to indicate the particular mantric teachings associated with each. In this case, however, it does not seem the term carries with it the notion of a "school" as it does when used in the compounds, **Śrīmata** or **Kālīmata**. As we have observed, the key issue is not which general term is used as the second member of a compound but rather which specific term is used to govern it.

maṭha: lit., "school of learning", "monastery", "ascetic's dwelling"; Used in this study specifically with reference to the two prominent centers of the Śaṅkara tradition in south India, namely, at Kāñcipuram in Tamil Nāḍu and at Śṛṅgeri in Karnāṭaka.

matsya: lit., "fish"; Another of the five prohibited substances (**pañcamakāras**) used during certain Kaula rituals including Kaula forms of **śrīcakra pūjā**.

meru: Sometimes, **sumeru**, is the name of the bejewelled mountain at the center of the universe around which all the planets revolve. In Śrīvidyā tradition it is identified with the **śrīcakra** in its three-dimensional form, thus the term **meru cakra** is used to indicate the three-dimensional **śrīcakra** and identifies it with Mount Meru. See **kailāsa**.

mūlamantra: lit., "root-mantra"; Every particular deity in each of its aspects has a mantra (or mantras) identified with its final or ultimate subtle (**sūkṣma**) nature. Often the term is used to indicate the "highest" form of a deity and the particular mantra identified with that form. (Thus distinguishing, for example, the mantra of Mahāgaṇapati from any other "lesser" aspect of the same god.) In the case of Śrīvidyā tradition the root-mantra of Lalitā is either the fifteen syllable mantra known as the **pañcadaśī** or **pañcadaśākṣarī** (in one of its twelve forms, including the popular kādi and hādi versions) or the sixteen syllable mantra known as **ṣoḍaśī** or **ṣoḍaśākṣarī**.

mudrā: lit., "seal", "stamp", "gesture"; One of the important ritual elements of Tantrism, **mudrās** are usually hand gestures which invoke, symbolize and "seal" a relationship between the person performing them and the divinity. Each **mudrā**'s significance is multivalent while the actual form can differ according to interpretation. In Śrīvidyā there are nine specific **mudrās** shown before each of

the nine sub-cakras (and identified with them as aspects of the presiding deities) and one **mudrā** meant to encompass the others or represent the supreme aspect of the goddess, viz., the **trikhaṇḍa mudrā**.

mudrā: lit., "fermented or parched grain"; One of the five prohibited substances (**pañcamakāras**) used in Kaula influenced Tantric rituals. Various grains are used in preparations that cause them to ferment and thus have an intoxicating effect.

naivedya: Any offering of food, cooked or otherwise, presented to a deity usually at the conclusion of ritual worship.

nibandha: lit., "binding", "compendium", "ritual handbook"; One of the two terms (the other is **paddhati**) used to indicate the ritual codification of a particular lineage or tradition and supply, as it were, the liturgy for all occasions. One of the most famous **nibandhas** of the pan-Indian Kaula school is the **Nityotsava** of Umānandanātha which codifies and presents the ritual formulas suggested by the **Paraśurāmakalpasūtra**. In Śrīvidyā tradition, Umānanda has been known the title **nibandhakāra**, the "composer of the handbook". **Nibandhas** and **paddhatis** are unpretentious, straightforward compendia with little elaboration or explanation accompanying the text. The intentions of the work are clear only to those with an "insider's" knowledge of the practical aspects of the tradition but they are revealing of at least the theoretical dimensions of a lineage's interpretations. Like many liturgies, however, there is room for interpretation, interpolation and revision, thus the **nibandhas** are not in themselves perfect reflections of the actual practice of a particular group or lineage.

nityā: lit., "eternal", "permanent"; In Śrīvidyā the term **nityā** is identified with the sixteen deities which embody the phases of the moon and thus the days of the fortnight. They are identical to the so-called **tithis** or the sixteen **kalās** but specifically refer to the deities identified with each of these days or aspects of the moon.

nyāsa: lit., "laying down", "placing", "imprinting", "interidentifying"; A process characteristic of Tantric ritual in which sounds, usually in the form of seed-syllables (**bījākṣaras**), are identified with parts of the human body, deities and yantras in order to form a series of microcosmic/macrocosmic relationships.

paddhati: See **nibandha**.

pañcadaśī: lit., "fifteen", sometimes **pañcadaśākṣarī**, "fifteen syllables"; One of the root-mantras (**mūlamantra**) of Lalitā in her supreme form. The mantra itself is usually not uttered aloud and thus the term is used to specify the mantra without violating its sanctity. The syllables are called **akṣaras**, that is, "indestructible", because they are believed to be aspects of the deity in the subtle (**sūksma**) form and thus reduced, as it were, to their most primary level. See **kādi**, **hādi** and **mūlamantra** above for further details.

pañcamakāra: lit., "the five m's", sometimes **mapañcaka**; The so-called five prohibited substances and activities that characterize Kaula influenced Tantric ritual. They are so-called because each term begins with the Sanskrit letter **m**, thus: **madya** (wine), **māṃsa** (meat), **matsya** (fish), **mudrā** (fermented grain) and **maithuna** (sexual intercourse). See each for further remarks.

parā: lit., "transcendent", "supreme"; Here taken with a feminine ending to indicate the goddess in her supreme aspect, namely, in the form of the **śrīcakra**.

parampara: lit., "one following another", "succession", "lineage"; Unlike any of the other terms indicating "tradition", **parampara** specifically indicates a lineage, that is, the succession of tradition from guru to student. There are, in effect, as many lineages as there are teachers though many are bound together in various types of relationships. The core of any Tantric tradition is found only in the **paramparas** since it is at this level that generalities are worked into specifics and teachings of the oral tradition are formulated and passed on.

parāśakti: lit., "supreme **Śakti** or goddess"; The general term used to designate the goddess in her highest aspect, that is, in a position of fundamental superiority encompassing even her consort Śiva. Śāktas do not discount the role of the male consort since he is viewed as a necessary component in the theological scheme. In Śrīvidyā the preferred form of **parāśakti** is Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī though other names are occasionally used and local beneficent aspects are equated with this central figure.

paśyantī: The first, non-articulated aspect of sound as it emanates from its primordial source of Brahman. This concept plays an important role in understanding how Tantrics view the devolution of the universe from a single

source as a parallel sound manifestation. See **madhyamā** and **vaikharī** for further details on the theory.

pītha: lit., "seat", "throne"; Indicating a center of a tradition and the individual who at the present time sits upon this seat of authority, i.e., the **pīthācārya**, or "teacher of the tradition". Used specifically in the present study to designate the Sāṅkara tradition's two major centers in south India at Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgeri, each of which has a traditional succession of teachers who take the title "Śaṅkarācārya" in order to establish their lineage relationship with the eighth-century Śaṅkarācārya.

prakāśa: lit., "illumination", "manifestation"; Technically used in Tantric discussions to distinguish Śiva's fundamental quality of "pure illuminative being" from Śakti's "reflective being" (**vimarśa**). Metaphysically, Śiva is considered insentient, eternal and hence, the purely "illuminative" source of creation while Śakti is the active and dynamic "self-reflection" of that one reality (identified as Brahman). It also refers to the Self (**ātman**) before devolving by karma and ignorance (**avidyā**) into a self-conscious, dualistic entity standing in relation to other objects, that is, the Self before it "reflects" (**vimarśa**) upon itself as such.

praṇava: The sacred syllable **auṃ**.

pratinidhi: lit., "representative", "substitute"; In Tantrism a **pratinidhi** is any element prescribed to be used as as representative or substitute for another. This is the common method employed for overcoming the social and practical difficulties associated with the five prohibited substances. It is usually clear, however, that just any substitute is not acceptable and in many cases lists of alternatives are given. Thus in the case of wine prescribed to be drunk at a certain point in the **śrīcakra pūjā**, a concoction of milk, honey and spices is substituted as the **pratinidhi**.

prayoga: lit., "use", "application", "scheme", "prescription"; The term is used in many ways to indicate some method or form of practice or procedure to be followed in ritual, meditation or in other situations. The important case in Śrīvidyā is the use, i.e., the **prayogas** associated with the first forty-one verses of the **Saudaryalaharī** as mantras, accompanied by prescriptions regarding the use of various mantras, offerings and other procedures.

pūjā: lit., "worship", "honor", "adoration", "ritual"; The most common term designating worship of any kind in Hinduism.

śabda: lit., "sound"; Indicating any sound from the most subtle emanation of the primordial absolute, that is, the so-called **śabdabrahman** to the most manifest and vulgar.

sādhana: lit., "accomplishing", "performing", "attainment", "discipline"; The term used to designate the particular spiritual, physical and mental discipline prescribed and implemented according to traditional teachings and following the instructions of a guru. **Sādhana** refers to both the forms of practice and the accomplishment of the discipline. See **siddhi** and **siddha**.

śaiva: A devotee of the male divinity, Śiva. Most Śāktas, that is, devotees of a female divinity are also part of Śaiva traditions and make no absolute distinction between Śākta practices and theology and Śaiva traditions. The difference is more one of emphasis than of strict sectarianism. There are, of course, Śāktas within Vaisṇava traditions (certain Pāñcarātrins, for example) but these form a minority within general Śākta Tantra traditions.

samaya: lit., "rule of conduct", "compact", "custom", "convention", "order", "precept"; Used in both a general and specific sense within Śākta traditions and especially after the fifteenth-century Laksmīdhara codifies the so-called Samaya Śrīvidyā tradition in order to rid it of Kaula influences such as the ritual use of the **pañcamakāras**. See Part One, Chapter One for an elaborate discussion of the meanings of the term.

saṃhārakrama: lit., "destruction method", "deconstructive perspective"; The manner of envisioning the **śrīcakra** or its ritual worship in which the adept begins with the outermost portions of the diagram and methodically moves towards the central **bindu**. It is called "destructive" or "deconstructive" because in the interpretation of the **śrīcakra** as the symbol and form of the universe the process of reuniting with the Absolute (i.e., achieving unity with Śiva and Śakti) the adept "destroys" the misconceptions of the dualistic world and "dismantles" any sense of separation with the Absolute.

sammelana(cakra): lit., "meeting together", "mixture", "union", or as a compound, "combination diagram"; The term is used specifically to designate the **yantra** associated with the dancing Śiva, Naṭarāja, as he is found within the famous

temple of Citamparam (Tamil spelling, Sanskrit "Cidambaram") in Tamil Nāḍu, India. The **yantra** or **cakra** is called a **sammelana** because it is believed to be a combination of Śiva and Śakti **cakras**; thus Naṭarāja encompasses both theological possibilities and symbolizes their union. The **cakra** is also called the "secret of Cidambaram" (**cidambaram rahasya**) because it is the transcendent form of Nataraja and its actual configuration is obscure and treated as an esoteric aspect of the god. The whole diagram is said (though not proven) to be beneath rows of golden **bilva** leaves which are visible to the naked eye. The "Śiva portion" of the **cakra** is perhaps described by the sixth-century Tamil saint, Tirumūlar in his **Tirumantiram**. The "Śakti portion" (or perhaps the whole of the configuration since the **śrīcakra** is itself a "combination" of Śiva and Śakti **cakras**) is identified by Umāpatiśivācārya as the **śrīcakra**. (See Part One, Chapter Two and Part Two, Chapter Three for details.)

sampradāya: lit., "tradition", "school", "doctrine", "handed down instruction"; The most general term used to designate the concept of a traditional teaching. Srīvidyā is sometimes called Saubhāgya Sampradāya because it is the tradition which focuses upon and elaborates the concepts surrounding the "beneficent" or "prosperous" (**saubhāgya**) aspect of the goddess. The term is sometimes used in more specific contexts with more narrow meanings to indicate the particular lineage of instruction, that is, the **parampara** within the broader tradition (such as Śrīvidyā). Thus an adept might be asked, "What is your **sampradāya**?", meaning to what lineage of Srīvidyā (or any other tradition) do you belong. The general sense of the term, however, allows the adept a greater flexibility and discretion in answering such a question.

Śaṅkarācārya: The eighth-century theologian whose interpretations of the major sources of Vedānta tradition are termed the "pure non-dualist doctrine" (**kevalādvaitavāda**) because of his unequivocal position that ultimately the Absolute Brahman is qualitiless (**nirguna**) and perfectly identical to the individual soul (**ātman**). Śaṅkarācārya (or Śaṅkara, as he is called, the term **ācārya** designating "teacher" or "master") maintained that theism was a useful and sometimes necessary means of qualifying the Absolute with attributes (**saguṇa**) in order to teach its transcendent identity with the soul. This position met with much opposition within Hindu circles as unbalanced and atheistic. Historically he is said to be responsible for the spread of his interpretations by having established centers of learning (**maṭhas**) throughout India and in the southern region at Śṛṅgeri in Karnāṭaka. According to the

traditions of the **matha** at Kāñcipuram, Tamil Nādu, Śaṅkara settled there after having "conquered the directions" (**digvijāya**, the term used to describe his preaching across the length and breadth of India) and composed his Śākta treatises and commentaries. In variance to the established Śaiva/Śākta traditions in the **maṭhas**, Hacker and other scholars have clearly demonstrated that Śaṅkara could not (or is very unlikely to) have composed these Śākta works. It seems also clear, however, that Śaiva/Śākta, and specifically Śrīvidyā, influences entered into the **matha** traditions sometime after the eighth-century (and before the eleventh-century) and that it is likely that one of the heirs of the Śāṅkara tradition composed these works and attributed them to the master. These disputes have never reached a satisfactory historical conclusion. From at least the fifteenth-century, Śaṅkara is clearly identified with Śrīvidyā tradition and the contemporary Śaṅkara **maṭhas** in both north and south India support the belief that he was a Śrīvidyā adept (but not solely a Śrīvidyā worshipper).

saubhāgya: lit., "good fortune", "prosperity", "auspiciousness", "blessedness", "grace"; The term within Śrīvidyā tradition is generally applied to the beneficent (**saumya**) aspects of the goddess but also to the effects of the practice of the tradition's spiritual disciplines. Thus Śrīvidyā is also known as **saubhāgya sampradāya**, or the "tradition of prosperity".

saumya: lit., "charming", "placid", "gentle", "beneficent"; Used to refer to the so-called **aghora** or "non-fearful" or "not terrifying" aspects of Hindu gods; specifically within Śrīvidyā it refers to the gentle and beneficent aspects of the goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī contrasting to the **ghora** or fearful Kālī or Durgā.

siddha: lit., "accomplished", "adept"; The term is used generally to designate any spiritually accomplished Tantric adept, that is, one who has obtained special insight or powers (**siddhis**); it may also suggest the traditions of rather eccentric, unpredictable adepts, such as the Tamil saint Tirumūlar; these saints' legends and writings reflect the extraordinary abilities attributed to them.

smārta: lit., "followers of the **smṛtis** or recollected scriptures"; The term is applied to the Brahmin castes which in south India draw their essentially Śaiva/Śākta traditions from the so-called **smṛti** body of literature and focus on the "**smārta** series" of divinities, namely, Śiva, Visnu, Śakti (usually designated by the name Durgā but encompassing all

feminine aspects), Ganeśa (or Gaṇapati, the elephant-headed eldest son of Śiva and Śakti) and the Vedic deity Sūrya, the Sun-god. They are distinguished in Tamil Nāḍu from other Saiva oriented Brahmins who function as priests (the so-called ādiśaivas) and sectarian Vaiṣṇava Brahmins.

ṣodaśī: lit., "sixteen", "sixteen year-old girl"; Also "sixteen syllables or parts", referring in Śrīvidyā to both the goddess in her youthful form and to a form of the goddess's **mūlamantra** consisting of sixteen syllables or parts. The controversy over the construction of the mantra leads one to conclude that it is an elaboration of the fifteen syllable form of the **śrīvidyā** since the ṣodaśī occurs in both a strict sixteen syllable form (the so-called "light" or "lesser" ṣodaśī) and a more elaborate "great" form (**mahāṣodaśī**) consisting of two sets of syllables appended to the fifteen syllable **kādi śrīvidyā**.

śṛṣthikrama: lit., "creation method", "constructive perspective"; The method of envisioning and worshipping the **śrīcakra** beginning with the innermost **bindu** and proceeding in an outward direction through the triangles, lotus petals and outer gateways.

sthūla: lit., "gross", "physical"; Used in Tantrism to refer to the physical, anthropomorphic images of deities and to suggest that these forms are "vulgar" in comparison to mantras (the subtle or **sūkṣma** forms) or yantras (the transcendent forms).

sūkṣma: lit., "subtle", "refined", "precise"; The mantric aspects of deities are referred to as their "subtle" (sūkṣma) forms because they are considered hierarchically superior to the physical, anthropomorphic aspects. Bhāskararāya refines this notion in his discussion of the Śrīvidyā mantra by referring to its "subtle", "subtler" and "subtlest" aspects.

tattva: lit., "reality", "fact", "metaphysical category", "that-ness"; According to Śākta Tantrism the categories of the constituent elements of the material world, called **tattvas**, number thirty-six. This concept of categorizing the fundamental material and mental substances is adopted and expanded upon from the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems and perhaps from earlier Kashmiri Śaiva discussions. See ET, p.52f. for a complete list and discussion.

traivarnika: lit., "three estates"; See **dvija** which has the identical meaning.

trikoṇa: lit., "three sides", "triangle"; Any triangle may be designated by the term **trikoṇa**, however, in Śrīvidyā the term is frequently used in the specific sense to designate the innermost triangle of the **śrīcakra**, that is, the **sarvānandamayacakra**.

twice-born: See **dvija**.

upācāra: lit., "service", "worship", "offering", "requisite articles"; *In the specific sense of* Tantric ritual, **upācāra** refers to the presentation of various substances such as flowers, food, sandlewood paste, **kumkum** powder and other auspicious articles near the conclusion of external worship (i.e., during **pūjā** or **bahiryāga**). These vary in number and follow differing prescriptions according to lineage traditions. According to PKS there are sixty-four prescribed **upācāras**. The **naivedya** or food offerings are a separate part of the formal **pūjā** but are generally considered under this term.

upāsana: lit., "sitting near", "worshipping", "attending", "spiritual discipline"; The term is multivalent since it suggests both loving devotion (**bhakti**) and concentrative awareness directed towards a particular deity following a specified spiritual practice (prescribed by the guru). Thus it has both a specific sense and a more general one suggesting any form of worship or devotion. The literal meaning of the term is useful for understanding its Tantric sense: the devotee or adept (i.e., the **upāsaka**) by "sitting beside" the deity draws closer to its nature through various acts of spiritual discipline. So long as a sense of distinction remains between adept and deity then the term aptly applies to the relationship of "proximity" that is suggested by it literally. The adept also puts him or herself in various metaphorical relationships of identity with the Absolute by positing mental, phyisical and verbal sets of relationships that "sit beside" one another.

vaikharī: lit., "speech", "articulated speech"; A technical term used to indicate the third and final phase of the devolution of the Absolute Brahman in the form of sound (i.e., **śabdabrahman**); **vaikharī** when taken with **paśyantī** and **madhyamā** forms the essential triad that explains the gradual formation of the material world from sound. All ordinary forms of language and articulated sound fall into this third category.

vasukoṇa: lit., "bejewelled triangles", "eight triangles"; The term **vasu** in this compound has the esoteric meaning of "eight"; thus the compound refers to the first set of eight

minor triangles of the **śrīcakra** following the innermost triangle (or **trikoṇa**). For a further discussion see Part One, Chapter Six.

vidyā: lit., "knowledge", "science", "mantra"; Another term with many different usages depending upon the context, **vidyā** refers to both mundane and spiritual (i.e., liberative) types of knowledge. But in Śākta Tantrism it is technically used to indicate mantras, especially mantras of female deities. Thus **śrīvidyā** refers to the "knowledge of Śrī (the goddess)", "auspicious knowledge" and specifically the embodiment of that knowledge in the form of the mantra called the **śrīvidyā**.

vāmācara: lit., "left(-handed) practice"; In the ordinary sense **vāmācara** is used to designate those Kaula influenced traditions of Tantrism which prescribe and employ ritually certain esoteric elements, such as the **pañcamakāras** and **kāmakalādhyāna**, that seemingly defy the conventions and standards of Brahmanical orthodoxy. It contrasts with the so-called "right-handed practice" (**dakṣiṇācāra**) which conforms to the usual expectations of Brahmanical society. Śrīvidyā has had both types of practice and no small amount of controversy concerning the appropriateness and value of each.

vimarśa: lit., "reflection", "thought", "deliberation"; Technically used to indicate the fundamental attribute of Śakti within Śaiva/Śākta Tantric theology, **vimarśa** refers to Śakti at the very first moment of self-reflection, that is, as the emergence of self-awareness as such. Since the Self (**ātman**) is eternal and absolutely identical with the primordial, absolute Brahman its ultimate nature is that of non-dualistic, non-reflective "illumination" (**prakāśa**, the attribute of Śiva). However, when the One devolves from its original, pristine condition its first "act" as such is self-cognition of itself---this is identified with Śakti as "reflection" (**vimarśa**).

vṛttatraya: lit., "three circles"; According to the majority of Śrīvidyā interpreters the **vṛttatraya** refers to the three outer circles surrounding the set of sixteen lotus petals on the **śrīcakra**. Bhāskararāya differs from this interpretation and claims the three circles are those that separate the sets of triangles from the lotus petals. His position, it would appear, is based on the ritual interpretation of the **śrīcakra** as an utterly purposeful diagram and since Bhāskararāya sees no ritual place for the three circles as surrounding the lotus petals he reinterprets the ordinary accepted placement of these

circles. This issue is important insofar as the technical point allows the observer to evaluate historical and contemporary followers of Bhāskararāya as authentically interpreting his views. It also sheds further light on the ritual use and construction of the **śrīcakra**.

yoginī: lit., "female attendant", "female yogi"; Technically used within Śrīvidyā to designate the attendant deities of Śakti as they preside (on her behalf) over various parts of the **śrīcakra**. The **yoginī**s are, in fact, merely aspects of Śakti embodying specific powers, principles and concepts which are identified with the adept's own spiritual nature and material achievements.

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